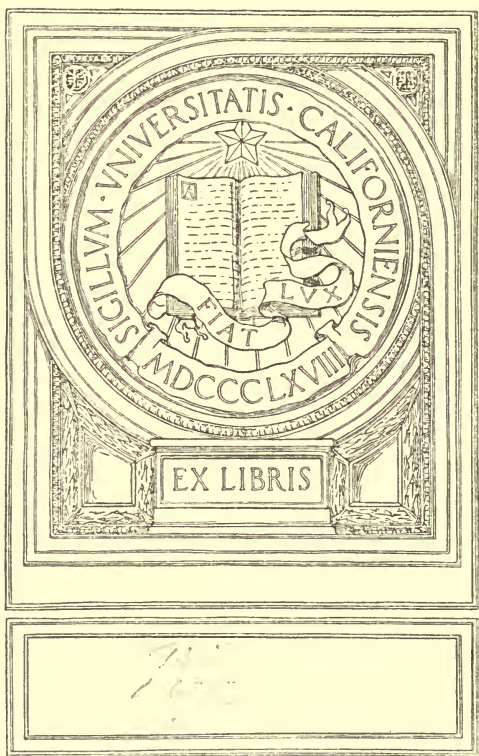


**THE BLACK
LION INN**



BY ALFRED HENRY LEWIS



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1903



THE BLACK LION INN.

THE
BLACK LION
INN

BY
ALFRED HENRY LEWIS

Illustrated by FREDERIC REMINGTON



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	HOW I CAME TO THE INN	1
II.	THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI	10
III.	HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED . .	29
IV.	THAT TOBACCO UPSET	41
V.	THE SIGN OF THREE	55
VI.	THAT WOLFFVILLE CHRISTMAS	69
VII.	THE PITT STREET STRINGENCY	82
VIII.	THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS	103
IX.	CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA	117
X.	HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK	129
XI.	THAT SMUGGLED SILK	141
XII.	THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS	158
XIII.	HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL . . .	170
XIV.	HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR	195
XV.	HOW MOH-KWA FED THE CATFISH . . .	208
XVI.	THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS	224
XVII.	THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN	238
XVIII.	THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY	249
XIX.	MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS . . .	261
XX.	THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS	274
XXI.	THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS . . .	289

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXII.	HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST	300
XXIII.	WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN	316
XXIV.	WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED . . .	331
XXV.	HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED . . .	342
XXVI.	HOW MOH-KWA SAVED THE STRIKE-AXE	357
XXVII.	THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY	369

ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE BLACK LION INN	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE SAUCY PAOLI	<i>Facing p. 12</i>
THE PONCA'S ROAN	" 24
FORKED TONGUE	" 36
OLD MAN ENRIGHT	" 70
THE DUBLIN TERROR	" 92
"THE ELK FEAR WAS IN HIS HEART". . . .	" 132
JIM BRITT	" 172
THE OPENHAND	" 210
THE COLDHEART	" 220
KWA-SIND	" 262
THE MEDICINE MAN	" 270
COLONEL MORTON	" 332
THE STRIKE-AXE	" 358
CHICKEN BILL	" 370
PIKE'S PEAK MARTIN	" 378

THE BLACK LION INN.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I CAME TO THE INN.

Years ago, I came upon an old and hoary tavern when I as a fashion of refugee was flying from strong drink. Its name, as shown on the creaking sign-board, was The Black Lion Inn. My coming was the fruit of no plan; the hostelry was strange to me, and my arrival, casual and desultory, one of those accidents which belong with the experiences of folk who, whipped of a bad appetite and running from rum, are seeking only to be solitary and win a vacation for their self-respect. This latter commodity in my own poor case had been sadly overworked, and called for rest and an opportunity of recuperation. Wherefore, going quietly and without word from the great city, I found this ancient inn with a purpose to turn presently sober. Also by remaining secluded for a space I would permit the memory of those recent dubious exploits of the cup to

THE BLACK LION INN.

become a bit dinned in the bosom of my discouraged relatives.

It turned a most fortunate blunder, this blundering discovery of the aged inn, for it was here I met the Jolly Doctor who, by saving me from my fate of a drunkard, a fate to which I was hopelessly surrendered, will dwell ever in my thoughts as a greatest benefactor.

There is that about an appetite for alcohol I can not understand. In my personal instance there is reason to believe it was inherited. And yet my own father never touched a drop and lived and died the uncompromising enemy of the bowl. It was from my grandsire, doubtless, I had any hankering after rum, for I have heard a sigh or two of how that dashing military gentleman so devoted himself to it that he fairly perished for very faithfulness as far away as eighty odd long years.

Once when my father and I were roaming the snow-filled woods with our guns—I was a lad of twelve—having heard little of that ancestor, I asked him what malady carried off my grandsire. My father did not reply at once, but stalked silently ahead, rifle caught under arm, the snow crunching beneath his heavy boots. Then he flung a sentence over his shoulder.

“Poor whiskey more than anything else,” said my father.

Even at the unripe age of twelve I could tell how the subject was unpleasant to my parent and

HOW I CAME TO THE INN.

did not press it. I saved my curiosity until evening when my mother and I were alone. My mother, to whom I re-put the query, informed me in whispers how she had been told—for she never met him, he being dead and gone before her day—my grandsire threw away his existence upon the bottle.

The taste for strong waters so developed in my grandsire would seem like a quartz-ledge to have “dipped” beneath my father to strike the family surface with all its old-time richness in myself. I state this the more secure of its truth because I was instantly and completely a drunkard, waiving every preliminary stage as a novice, from the moment of my first glass.

It was my first day of the tavern when I met the Jolly Doctor. The tavern was his home—for he lived a perilous bachelor—and had been many years; and when, being in a shaken state, I sent down from the apartments I had taken and requested the presence of a physician, he came up to me. He had me right and on my feet in the course of a few hours, and then I began to look him in the face and make his acquaintance.

As I abode in the tavern for a considerable space, we put in many friendly hours together. The Jolly Doctor was a round, strong, active body of a man, virile and with an atmosphere almost hypnotic. His forehead was good, his jaw hard, his nose arched, while his gray-blue eyes,

THE BLACK LION INN.

half sour, half humorous and deeply wise of the world, gleamed in his head with the shine of beads.

One evening while we were together about the fireplace of my parlor, I was for having up a bottle of sherry.

“Before you give the order,” said the Jolly Doctor, restraining me with a friendly yet semi-professional gesture, “let me say a word. Let me ask whether you have an intention or even a hope of one day—no matter how distant—quitting alcohol?” Without pausing for my answer, the Jolly Doctor went on. “You are yet a young man; I suppose you have seen thirty years. It has been my experience, albeit I’m but fifteen years your senior and not therefore as old as a hill, that no man uproots a habit after he has reached middle age. While climbing, mentally, physically, nervously, the slope of his years and adding to, not taking from, his strength, a man may so far re-draw himself as to make or break an appetite—the appetite of strong drink—if you will. But let him attain the summit of his strength, reach as it were the crest of his days and begin to travel down the easy long descent toward the grave, and every chance of change has perished beyond his reach. You are thirty; and to make it short, my friend, you must, considering what bottle tendencies lie latent within you, stop now and stop hard, or you are lost forever.”

HOW I CAME TO THE INN.

To say I was impressed is not to exaggerate. I was frank enough to confess, however, that privately I held no hope of change. Several years before, I had become convinced, after a full survey of myself and the close study of my inclinations, that I was born to live and die, like my grandsire, the victim of drink. I was its thrall, bound to it as I lay in my cradle; there existed no gate of escape. This I told; not joyously, I promise you, or as one reciting good fortune; not argumentatively and as reason for the forthcoming of asked-for wine; but because it was true and made, as I held it, a reason for going in this matter of tippie with freest rein since dodge or balk my fate I might not.

At the close my Jolly Doctor shook his head in negative.

“No man knows his destiny,” said he, “until the game’s played out. Come, let me prescribe for you. The drug I have in mind has cured folk; I should add, too, that for some it carries neither power nor worth. Still, it will do no harm, and since we may have a test of its virtues within three days; at the worst you will be called upon to surrender no more than seventy-two hours to sobriety.” This last was delivered like a cynic.

On my side, I not only thanked the Jolly Doctor for his concern, but hastened to assure him I would willingly make pact to abstain from alcohol not three days, but three weeks or three months,

THE BLACK LION INN.

were it necessary to pleasure his experiment. My bent for drink was in that degree peculiar that I was not so much its disciple who must worship constantly and every day, as one of those who are given to sprees. Often and of choice I was a stranger to so much as the odor of rum for weeks on end. Then would come other weeks of tumult and riot and drunkenness. The terms of trial for his medicine would be easily and comfortably undergone by me. He had my promise of three days free of rum.

The Jolly Doctor went to his room; returning, he placed on the table a little bottle of liquid, reddish in color and bitter of taste.

“Red cinchona, it is,” said the Jolly Doctor; “cinchona rubra, or rather the fluid extract of that bark. It is not a tincture; there is no alcohol about it. The remedy is well known and I oft marvel it has had no wider vogue. As I’ve told you, and on the principle, probably, that one man’s poison is another man’s food, it does not always cure. However, we will give you a tea-spoonful once in three hours and observe the effect in your particular case.”

There shall be little more related on this point of dyspomania and its remedy. I took the prescription for a trio of days. At the expiration I sate me solemnly down and debated within myself whether or no I craved strong drink, with the full purpose of calling for it if I did. Absolutely,

HOW I CAME TO THE INN.

the anxiety was absent; and since I had resolved not to force the bottle upon myself, but to give the Jolly Doctor and his drug all proper show to gain a victory, I made no alcohol demands. All this was years ago, and from that hour until now, when I write these lines, I've neither taken nor wanted alcohol. I've gone freely where it was, and abode for hours at tables when others poured and tossed it off; for myself I've craved none and taken none.

Toward the last of my stay, there came to dwell at the hostelry a goodly circle; one for a most part chance-sown. For days it had been snowing with a free, persistent hand; softly, industriously, indomitably fell the flakes, straight down and unflurried of a wind, until the cold light element lay about the tavern for a level depth of full three feet. It was the sort of weather in which one should read Whittier's *Snow-Bound*.

Our circle, as snow-pent and held within door we drew about the tavern fire, offered a chequered citizenry. On the earliest occasion of our comradeship, while the snow sifted about the old-fashioned panes and showed through them with the whiteness of milk, I cast my eye over the group to collect for myself a mental picture of my companions.

At the right hand of the Jolly Doctor, solid in his arm chair, sat a Red Nosed Gentleman. He showed prosperous of this world's goods and

THE BLACK LION INN.

owned to a warm weakness for burgundy. He was particular to keep ever a bottle at his elbow, and constantly supported his interest in what was current with a moderate glass.

In sharpest contrast to the Red Nosed Gentleman there should be mentioned a gray old gentleman of sour and forbidding eye. The Jolly Doctor, who had known him for long, gave me in a whisper his story. This Sour Gentleman, like the Red Nosed Gentleman, had half retired from the cares of business. The Red Nosed Gentleman in his later days had been a stock speculator, as in sooth had the Sour Gentleman, and each would still on occasion carry a few thousand shares for a week or two and then swoop on a profit with quite the eagerness of any hawk on any hen.

Not to be overlooked, in a corner nearest the chimney was a seamed white old figure, tall and spare, yet with vigorous thews still strung in the teeth of his all but four score years. He was referred to during our amiable captivity, and while we sate snow-locked about the mighty fire-place, as the Old Cattleman.

Half comrade and half ward, our Old Cattleman had with him a taciturn, grave individual, to whom he gave the title of "Sioux Sam," and whose father, he informed us, had been a French trader from St. Louis, while his mother was a squaw of

HOW I CAME TO THE INN.

the tribe that furnished the first portion of his name.

As we brought arm chairs about the fire-place on our first snow-bound evening, moved possibly by the Red Nosed Gentleman's burgundy, which that florid person had urged upon his attention, the Jolly Doctor set the little community a good story-telling example.

"This story, I should premise," said the Jolly Doctor, mollifying certain rawnesses of his throat with a final glass of the Red Nosed Gentleman's burgundy, "belongs to no experience of my own. I shall tell it as it was given me. It speaks broadly of the west and of the folk of cows and the Indians, and was set uppermost in my memory by the presence of our western friends." Here the Jolly Doctor indicated the Old Cattleman and that product of the French fur trader and his Indian wife, Sioux Sam, by a polite wave of his glass. Then tossing off the last of his burgundy he, without tedious preliminary, struck into his little history.

CHAPTER II.

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

Gray Wolf sits within the shadow of the agency cottonwood and puffs unhappy kinnikinic from his red stone pipe. Heavy, dull and hot lies the August afternoon; heavy, dull and hot lies the heart of Gray Wolf. There is a profound grief at his soul's roots. The Indian's is not a mobile face. In full expression it is capable only of apathy or rage. If your Indian would show you mirth or woe, he must eke out the dim and half-told story with streaks of paint. But so deep is the present sorrow of Gray Wolf that, even without the aid of graphic ochre, one reads some shadow of it in the wrinkled brows and brooding eyes.

What is this to so beat upon our dismal Osage? There is a dab of mud in his hair; his blanket is rags, and his moccasins are rusty and worn. These be weeds of mourning. Death has crept to the tepee of Gray Wolf and taken a prey. It was Catbird, the squaw of Gray Wolf.

However, his to-day's sadness is not for the departed Catbird. He married her without laughter, and saw her pass without tears, as became a

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

man and an Osage. When her breath was gone, the women combed her hair and dressed her in new, gay clothes, and burned the sacred cedar. Gray Wolf, after the usage of his fathers, seated her—knees to chin—on yonder hilltop, wrapped her in rawhides, and, as against the curiosity of coyotes and other prowling vermin of the night, builded her solidly about and over with heavy stones. You may see the rude mausole, like some tumbledown chimney, from the agency door. That was a moon ago. Another will go by; Gray Wolf will lay off his rags and tatters, comb the clay from his hair, and give a dance to show that he mourns no more. No, it is not the lost Cat-bird—good squaw though she was—that embitters the tobacco and haunts the moods of Gray Wolf. It is something more awful than death—that merest savage commonplace; something to touch the important fiber of pride.

Gray Wolf is proud, as indeed he has concern to be. Not alone is he eminent as an Osage; he is likewise an eminent Indian. Those two thin ragged lines of blue tattoo which, on each side from the point of the jaw, run downward on the neck until they disappear beneath his blanket, prove Gray Wolf's elevation. They are the marks of an aboriginal nobility whereof the paleface in his ignorance knows nothing. Thirty Indians in all the tribes may wear these marks. And yet, despite such signs of respect, Gray Wolf has be-

THE BLACK LION INN.

come the subject of acrid tribal criticism; and he feels it like the edge of a knife.

Keats was quill-pricked to death by critics. But Keats was an Englishman and a poet. Petronius Arbiter, Nero's minion, was also criticised; despite the faultfinder, however, he lived in cloudless merry luxury, and died laughing. But Petronius was a Roman and an epicure. Gray Wolf is to gain nothing by these examples. He would not die like the verse maker, he could not laugh like the consul; there is a gulf between Gray Wolf and these as wide as the width of the possible. Gray Wolf is a stoic, and therefore neither so callous nor so wise as an epicure. Moreover, he is a savage and not a poet. Petronius came to be nothing better than an appetite; Gray Wolf rises to the heights of an emotion. Keats was a radical of sensibility, ransacking a firmament; Gray Wolf is an earthgoing conservative—a more stupendous Tory than any Bolingbroke. Of the two, while resembling neither, Gray Wolf comes nearer the poet than the Sybarite, since he can feel.

Let it be remarked that Osage criticism is no trivial thing. It is so far peculiar that never a word or look, or even a detractory shrug is made to be its evidence. Your Osage tells no evil tales of you to his neighbor. His conduct goes guiltless of slanderous syllable or gesture. But he criticises you in his heart; he is strenuous to think ill of you; and by some fashion of telepathy



THE SAUCY PAOLI.

THE NEW
AMERICAN

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

you know and feel and burn with this tacit condemnation as much as ever you might from hot irons laid on your forehead. It is this criticism, as silent as it is general, that gnaws at Gray Wolf's heart and makes his somber visage more somber yet.

It was the week before when Gray Wolf, puffed of a vain conceit, matched Sundown, his pinto pony—swift as a winter wind, he deemed her—against a piebald, leggy roan, the property of Dull Ox, the cunning Ponca. The race had wide advertisement; it took shape between the Osages and the Poncas as an international event. Gray Wolf assured his tribe of victory; his Sundown was a shooting star, the roan a turtle; whereupon the Osages, ever ready as natural patriots to believe the worst Osage thing to be better than the best thing Ponca, fatuously wagered their substance on Sundown, even unto the beads on their moccasins.

The race was run; the ubiquitous roan, fleetier than a shadow, went by poor Sundown as though she ran with hobbles on. Dull Ox won; the Poncas won. The believing Osages were stripped of their last blanket; and even as Gray Wolf sits beneath the agency cottonwood and writhes while he considers what his pillaged countrymen must think of him, the exultant Poncas are in the midst of a protracted spree, something in the nature of a scalp dance, meant to celebrate their triumph

THE BLACK LION INN.

and emphasize the thoroughness wherewith the Osages were routed. Is it marvel, then, that Osage thought is full of resentment, or that Gray Wolf feels its sting?

Over across from the moody Gray Wolf, Bill Henry lounges in the wide doorway of Florer's agency store. Bill Henry is young, about twenty-three, in truth. He has a quick, handsome face, with gray eyes that dance and gleam, and promise explosiveness of temper. The tan that darkens Bill Henry's skin wherever the sun may get to it, and which is comparable to the color of a saddle or a law book, testifies that the vivacious Bill is no recent importation. Five full years on the plains would be needed to ripen one to that durable hue.

Bill gazes out upon Gray Wolf as the latter sticks to the cottonwood's shade; a plan is running in the thoughts of Bill. There is call for change in Bill's destinies, and he must have the Gray Wolf's consent to what he bears in mind.

Bill has followed cattle since he turned his back on Maryland, a quintet of years before, and pushed westward two thousand miles to commence a career. Bill's family is of that aristocracy which adorns the "Eastern Shore" of Lord Baltimore's old domain. His folk are of consequence, and intended that Bill should take a high position. Bill's mother, an ardent church woman, had a pulpit in her thoughts for Bill; his father, more

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

of the world, urged on his son the law. But Bill's bent was towards the laws neither of heaven nor of men. The romantic overgrew the practical in his nature. He leaned not to labor, whether mental or physical, and he liked danger and change and careless savageries.

Civilization is artificial; it is a creature of convention, of clocks, of hours, of an unending procession of sleep, victuals and work. Bill distasted such orderly matters and felt instinctive abhorrence therefor. The day in and day out effort called for to remain civilized terrified Bill; his soul gave up the task before it was begun.

But savagery? Ah, that was different! Savagery was natural, easy and comfortable to the very heart's blood of Bill, shiftless and wild as it ran. Bill was an instance of what wise folk term "reversion to type," and thus it befell, while his father tugged one way and his mother another, Bill himself went suddenly from under their hands, fled from both altar and forum, and never paused until he found himself within the generous reaches of the Texas Panhandle. There, as related, and because savagery cannot mean entire idleness, Bill gave himself to a pursuit of cows, and soon had moderate fame as a rider, a roper, a gambler, and a quick, sure hand with a gun, and for whatever was deemed excellent in those regions wherein he abode.

Bill's presence among the Osages is the upcome

THE BLACK LION INN.

of a dispute which fell forth between Bill and a comrade in a barroom of Mobeetie. Bill and the comrade aforesaid played at a device called "draw poker;" and Bill, in attempting to supply the deficiencies of a four flush with his six shooter, managed the other's serious wounding. This so shook Bill's standing in the Panhandle, so marked him to the common eye as a boy of dangerous petulance, that Bill sagely withdrew between two days; and now, three hundred miles to the north and east, he seeks among the Indians for newer pastures more serene.

When we meet him Bill has been with the Osages the space of six weeks. And already he begins to doubt his welcome. Not that the Osages object. Your Indian objects to nothing that does not find shape as an immediate personal invasion of himself. But the government agent—a stern, decisive person—likes not the presence of straggling whites among his copper charges; already has he made intimation to Bill that his Osage sojourn should be short. Any moment this autocrat may despatch his marshal to march Bill off the reservation.

Bill does not enjoy the outlook. Within the brief frontiers of those six weeks of his visit, Bill has contracted an eager fondness for Osage life. Your Indian is so far scriptural that he taketh scant heed of the morrow, and believeth with all his soul that sufficient unto the day is the evil

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

thereof. Here was a program to dovetail with those natural moods of Bill. His very being, when once it understood, arose on tiptoe to embrace it. Bill has become an Osage in his breast; as he poses with listless grace in Florer's portals, he is considering means whereby he may manage a jointure with the tribe, and become in actual truth a member.

There is but one door to his coming; Bill must wed his way into Osage citizenship. He must take a daughter of the tribe to wife; turn "squaw man," as it is called. Then will Bill be a full-blown Osage; then may no agent molest him or make him afraid.

This amiable plot, as he lounges in Florer's door, is already decided upon by Bill. His fancy has even pitched upon the damsel whom he will honor with the title of "Mrs. Bill." It is this selection that produces Gray Wolf as a factor in Bill's intended happiness, since Gray Wolf is the parent of the Saucy Paoli, to whom Bill's hopes are turned. Bill must meet and treat with Gray Wolf for his daughter, discover her "price," and pay it.

As to the lady herself and her generous consent when once her father is won, Bill harbors no misgivings. He believes too well of his handsome person; moreover, has he not demonstrated in friendly bout, on foot and on horseback, his superiority to the young Osage bucks who would

THE BLACK LION INN.

pit themselves against him? Has he not out-run, out-wrestled and out-ridden them? And at work with either rifle, six-shooter or knife, has he not opened their eyes? Also, he has conquered them at cards; and their money and their ponies and their gewgaws to a healthful value are his as spoils thereof.

Bill is all things that a lady of sensibility should love; and for that on those two or three occasions when he came unexpectedly upon her, the Saucy Paoli dodged within the ancestral lodge to daub her nose and cheeks with hurried yet graceful red, thereby to improve and give her beauties point, Bill knows he has touched her heart. Yes, forsooth! Bill feels sure of the Saucy Paoli; it is Gray Wolf, somber of his late defeat by the wily Dull Ox and the evanescent roan, toward whom his apprehensions turn their face. The more, perhaps, since Bill himself, not being a blinded Osage, and having besides some certain wit concerning horses, scrupled not to wager and win on the Ponca entry, and against the beloved Sundown of his father-in-law to come. It is the notion that Gray Wolf might resent this apostasy that breeds a half pause in Bill's optimism as he loafs in Florer's door.

As Bill stands thus musing, the Saucy Paoli goes by. The Saucy Paoli is light, pretty, round and wholesome, and she glances with shy, engaging softness on Bill from eyes as dark and big

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

and deep as a deer's. Is it not worth while to wed her? The Osages are owners in fee of one million, five hundred thousand acres of best land; they have eight even millions of dollars stored in the Great Father's strong chests in Washington; they are paid each one hundred and forty dollars by their fostering Great Father as an annual present; and the head of the house draws all for himself and his own. Marriage will mean an instant yearly income of two hundred and eighty dollars; moreover, there may come the profitable papoose, and with each such a money augmentation of one hundred and forty dollars. And again, there are but sixteen hundred Osages told and counted; and so would Bill gain a strong per cent. in the tribal domain and the tribal treasure. Altogether, a union with the fair, brown Saucy Paoli is a prospect fraught of sunshine; and so Bill wisely deems it.

For an hour it has leaped in Bill's thoughts as an impulse to go across to the spreading cottonwood, propose himself to the Gray Wolf for the Saucy Paoli, and elicit reply. It would not be the Osage way, but Bill is not yet an Osage, and some reasonable allowance should be made by Gray Wolf for the rudeness of a paleface education. Such step would earn an answer, certain and complete. Your savage beateth not about the bush. His diplomacy is Bismarckian; it is direct and proceeds by straight lines.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Thus chase Bill's cogitations when the sudden sight of the Saucy Paoli and her glances, full of wist and warmth, fasten his gallant fancy and crystalize a resolution to act at once.

"How!" observes Bill, by way of salutation, as he stands before Gray Wolf.

That warrior grunts swinish, though polite, response. Then Bill goes directly to the core of his employ; he explains his passion, sets forth his hopes, and by dashing swoops arrives at the point which, according to Bill's blunt theories, should quicken the interest of Gray Wolf, and says:

"Now, what price? How many ponies?"

"How many you give?" retorts the cautious Gray Wolf.

"Fifteen." Bill stands ready to go to thirty.

"Ugh!" observes Gray Wolf, and then he looks out across the prairie grasses where the thick smoke shows the summer fires to be burning them far away.

"Thirty ponies," says Bill after a pause.

These or their money equivalent—six hundred dollars—Bill knows to be a fat figure. He believes Gray Wolf will yield.

But Bill is in partial error. Gray Wolf is not in any sordid, money frame. Your savage is a sentimentalist solely on two matters: those to touch his pride and those to wake his patriotism. And because of the recent triumph of the Poncas,

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

and the consequent censures upon him now flaming, though hidden, in the common Osage heart, Gray Wolf's pride is raw and throbbing. He looks up at Bill where he waits.

"One pony!" says Gray Wolf.

"One?"

"But it must beat the Ponca's roan."

Four hundred miles to the westward lie the broad ranges of the Triangle-Dot. Throughout all cow-land the ponies of the Triangle-Dot have name for speed. As far eastward as the Panhandle and westward to the Needles, as far southward as Seven Rivers and northward to the Spanish Peaks, has their fame been flung. About camp fires and among the boys of cows are tales told of Triangle-Dot ponies that overtake coyotes and jack-rabbits. More, they are exalted as having on a time raced even with an antelope. These ponies are children of a blue-grass sire, as thoroughbred as ever came out of Kentucky. Little in size, yet a ghost to go; his name was Redemption. These speedy mustang babies of Redemption have yet to meet their master in the whole southwest. And Bill knows of them; he has seen them run.

"In two moons, my father," says Bill.

There is much creaking of saddle leathers; there is finally a deep dig in the flanks by the long spurs, and Bill, mounted on his best, rides out of Pauhauska. His blankets are strapped

THE BLACK LION INN.

behind, his war bags bulge with provand, he is fully armed; of a verity, Bill meditates a journey. Four hundred miles—and return—no less, to the ranges of the Triangle-Dot.

Gray Wolf watches from beneath the cottonwood that already begins to throw its shadows long; his eyes follow Bill until the latter's broad brimmed, gray sombrero disappears on the hillcrests over beyond Bird River.

It skills not to follow Bill in this pilgrimage. He fords rivers; he sups and sleeps at casual camps; now and again he pauses for the night at some chance plaza of the Mexicans; but first and last he pushes ever on and on at a round road gait, and with the end he has success.

Within his time by full three weeks Bill is again at the agency of the Osages; and with him comes a pony, lean of muzzle, mild of eye, wide of forehead, deep of lung, silken of mane, slim of limb, a daughter of the great Redemption; and so true and beautiful is she in each line she seems rather for air than earth. And she is named the Spirit.

Gray Wolf goes over the Spirit with eye and palm. He feels her velvet coat; picks up one by one her small hoofs, polished and hard as agate.

The Spirit has private trial with Sundown and leaves that hopeless cayuse as if the latter were pegged to the prairie.

“Ugh!” says Gray Wolf, at the finish. “Heap good pony!”

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

Your savage is not a personage of stop-watches, weights and records. At the best, he may only guess concerning a pony's performance. Also his vanity has wings, though his pony has none, and once he gets it into his savage head that his pony can race, it is never long ere he regards him as invincible. Thus is it with Dull Ox and his precious roan. That besotted Ponca promptly accepts the Gray Wolf challenge for a second contest.

The day arrives. The race is to be run on the Osage course—a quarter of a mile, straight-away—at the Pauhauska agency. Two thousand Osages and Poncas are gathered together. There is no laughter, no uproar, no loud talk; all is gravity, dignity and decorum. The stakes are one thousand dollars a side, for Gray Wolf and Dull Ox are opulent pagans.

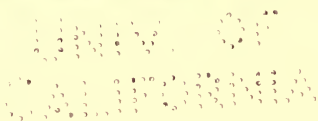
The ponies are brought up and looked over. The fires of a thousand racing ancestors burn in the eyes of the Spirit; the Poncas should take warning. But they do not; wagers run higher. The Osages have by resolution of their fifteen legislators brought the public money to the field. Thus they are rich for speculation, where, otherwise, by virtue of former losses, they would be helpless with empty hands.

Bet after bet is made. The pool box is a red blanket spread on the grass. It is presided over by a buck, impecunious but of fine integrity.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Being moneyless, he will make no bet himself; being honest, he will faithfully guard the treasure put within his care. A sporting buck approaches the blanket; he grumbles a word or two in the ear of the pool master who sits at the blanket's head; then he searches forth a hundred-dollar bill from the darker recesses of his blanket and lays it on the red betting-cloth. Another comes up; the pool master murmurs the name of the pony on which the hundred is offered; it is covered by the second speculator; that wager is complete. Others arrive at the betting blanket; its entire surface becomes dotted with bank notes—two and two they lie together, each wagered against the other. The blanket is covered and concealed with the money piled upon it. One begins to wonder how a winner is to know his wealth. There will be no clash, no dispute. Savages never cheat; and each will know his own. Besides, there is the poverty-eaten, honest buck, watching all, to be appealed to should an accidental confusion of wagers occur.

On a bright blanket, a trifle to one side—not to be under the moccasins of commerce, as it were—sits the Saucy Paoli. She is without motion; and a blanket, covering her from little head to little foot, leaves not so much as a stray lock or the tip of an ear for one's gaze to rest upon. The Saucy Paoli is present dutifully to answer the outcome of the Gray Wolf's pact with



THE PONCA'S ROAN.

THE NEW
AMERICAN

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

Bill. One wonders how does her heart beat, and how roam her hopes? Is she for the roan, or is she for the Glory of the Triangle-Dot?

The solemn judges draw their blankets about them and settle to their places. Three Poncas and three Osages on a side they are; they seat themselves opposite each other with twenty feet between. A line is drawn from trio to trio; that will serve as wire. The pony to cross first will be victor.

Now all is ready! The rival ponies are at the head of the course; it will be a standing start. A grave buck sits in the saddle near the two racers and to their rear. He is the starter. Suddenly he cracks off a Winchester, skyward. It is the signal.

The ponies leap like panthers at the sound. There is a swooping rush; for one hundred yards they run together, then the Spirit takes the lead. Swifter than the thrown lance, swift as the sped arrow she comes! With each instant she leaves and still further leaves the roan! What has such as the mongrel pony of the Poncas to do with the Flower of the Triangle-Dot? The Spirit flashes between the double triumvirate of judges, winner by fifty yards!

And now one expects a shout. There is none. The losing Poncas and the triumphant Osages alike are stolid and dignified. Only Gray Wolf's eyes gleam, and the cords in his neck swell. He

THE BLACK LION INN.

has been redeemed with his people; his honor has been returned; his pride can again hold up its head. But while his heart may bound, his face must be like iron. Such is the etiquette of savagery.

Both Gray Wolf and the Osages will exult later, noisily, vociferously. There will be feasting and dancing. Now they must be grave and guarded, both for their own credit and to save their Ponca adversaries from a wound.

Bill turns and rides slowly back to the judges. The Spirit, daughter of Redemption, stands with fire eyes and tiger lily nostrils. Bill swings from the saddle. Gray Wolf throws off the blanket from the Saucy Paoli, where she waits, head bowed and silent. Her dress is the climax of Osage magnificence; the Saucy Paoli glows like a ruby against the dusk green of the prairie. Bill takes the Saucy Paoli's hand and raises her to her feet.

She lifts her head. Her glance is shy, yet warm and glad. She hesitates. Then, as one who takes courage—just as might a white girl, though with less of art—she puts up her lips to be kissed.

“Now that is what I call a fair story,” commented the Red Nosed Gentleman approvingly when the Jolly Doctor came to a pause; “only I

THE WINNING OF SAUCY PAOLI.

don't like that notion of a white man marrying an Indian. It's apt to keep alive in the children the worst characteristics of both races and none of the virtues of either."

"Now I don't know that," observed the Sour Gentleman, contentiously. "In my own state of Virginia many of our best people are proud to trace their blood to Pocahontas, who was sold for a copper kettle. I, myself, am supposed to have a spoonful of the blood of that daughter of Powhatan in my veins; and while it is unpleasant to recall one's ancestress as having gone from hand to hand as the subject of barter and sale—and for no mighty price at that—I cannot say I would wish it otherwise. My Indian blood fits me very well. Did you say"—turning to the Jolly Doctor—"did you say, sir, you knew this young man who won the Saucy Paoli?"

"No," returned the Jolly Doctor, "I am guiltless of acquaintance with him. The story came to me from one of our Indian agents."

While this talk went forward, Sioux Sam, who understood English perfectly and talked it very well, albeit with a guttural Indian effect, and who had listened to the Jolly Doctor's story with every mark of interest, was saying something in a whisper to the Old Cattleman.

"He tells me," remarked the Old Cattleman in reply to my look of curiosity, "that if you-all's don't mind, he'll onfold on you a Injun tale himse'f.

THE BLACK LION INN.

It's one of these yere folk-lore stories, I suppose, as Doc Peets used to call 'em."

The whole company made haste to assure Sioux Sam that his proposal was deeply the popular one; thus cheered, our dark-skinned raconteur, first lighting his pipe with a coal from the great fireplace, issued forth upon his verbal journey.

"An' this," said Sioux Sam, lifting a dark finger to invoke attention and puffing a cloud the while, "an' this tale, which shows how Forked Tongue, the bad medicine man, was burned, must teach how never to let the heart fill up with hate like a pond with the rains, nor permit the tongue to go a crooked trail."

CHAPTER III.

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

The time is long, long ago. Ugly Elk is the great chief of the Sioux, an' he's so ugly an' his face so hideous, he makes a great laugh wherever he goes. But the people are careful to laugh when the Ugly Elk's back is toward them. If they went in front of him an' laugh, he'd go among them with his stone war-axe; for Ugly Elk is sensitive about his looks.

Ugly Elk is the warchief of the Sioux an' keeps his camp on the high bluffs that mark the southern border of the Sioux country where he can look out far on the plains an' see if the Pawnees go into the Sioux hills to hunt. Should the Pawnees try this, then Ugly Elk calls up his young men an' pounces on the Pawnees like a coyote on a sage hen, an' when Ugly Elk gets through, the Pawnees are hard to find.

It turns so, however, that the Pawnees grow tired. Ugly Elk's war yell makes their knees weak, an' when they see the smoke of his fire they turn an' run. Then Ugly Elk has peace in his tepees on the bluffs, an' eats an' smokes an' counts his scalps an' no Pawnee comes to anger

THE BLACK LION INN.

him. An' the Sioux look up to him as a mighty fighter, an' what Ugly Elk says goes as law from east to west an' no'th to south throughout the country of the Sioux.

Ugly Elk has no sons or daughters an' all his squaws are old an' dead an' asleep forever in their rawhides, high on pole scaffolds where the wolves can't come. An' because Ugly Elk is lonesome an' would hear good words about his lodge an' feel that truth is near, he asks his nephew, Running Water, to live with him when now the years grow deep an' deeper on his head. The nephew is named Running Water because there is no muddiness of lies about him, an' his life runs clear an' swift an' good. Some day Running Water will be chief, an' then they will call him Kill-Bear, because he once sat down an' waited until a grizzly came up; an' when he had come up, Running Water offered him the muzzle of his gun to bite; an' then as the grizzly took it between his jaws, Running Water blew off his head. An' for that he was called Kill-Bear, an' made chief. But that is not for a long time, an' comes after Ugly Elk has died an' been given a scaffold of poles with his squaws.

Ugly Elk has his heart full of love for Running Water an' wants him ever in his sight an' to hear his voice. Also, he declares to the Sioux that they must make Running Water their chief when he is gone. The Sioux say that if he will fight

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

the Pawnees, like Ugly Elk, until the smoke of his camp is the smoke of fear to the Pawnees, he shall be their chief. An' because Running Water is as bold as he is true, Ugly Elk accepts the promise of the Sioux an' rests content that all will be as he asks when his eyes close for the long sleep.

But while Ugly Elk an' Running Water are happy for each other, there is one whose heart turns black as he looks upon them. It is Forked Tongue, the medicine man; he is the cousin of Ugly Elk, an' full of lies an' treachery. Also, he wants to be chief when that day comes for Ugly Elk to die an' go away. Forked Tongue feels hate for Running Water, an' he plans to kill him.

Forked Tongue talks with Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, an' who has once helped Forked Tongue with his medicine. Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, is very wise; also he wants revenge on Forked Tongue, who promised him a bowl of molasses an' then put a cheat on him.

When Forked Tongue powwows with Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear thinks now he will have vengeance on Forked Tongue, who was false about the molasses. Thereupon, he rests his head on his paw, an' makes as if he thinks an' thinks; an' after a long while he tells Forked Tongue what to do.

"Follow my word," says Moh-Kwa, "an' it will bring success."

THE BLACK LION INN.

But Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, doesn't say to whom "success" will come; nor does Forked Tongue notice because liars are ever quickest to believe, an' there is no one so easy to deceive as a treacherous man. Forked Tongue leaves Moh-Kwa an' turns to carry out his su'gestions.

Forked Tongue talks to Ugly Elk when they're alone an' touches his feelings where they're sore.

"The Running Water laughs at you," says Forked Tongue to Ugly Elk. "He says you are more hideous than a gray gaunt old wolf, an' that he must hold his head away when you an' he are together. If he looked at you, he says, you are so ugly he would laugh till he died."

Then the Ugly Elk turned to fire with rage.

"How will you prove that?" says Ugly Elk to Forked Tongue.

Forked Tongue is ready, for Moh-Kwa has foreseen the question of Ugly Elk.

"You may prove it for yourself," says Forked Tongue. "When you an' Running Water are together, see if he does not turn away his head."

That night it is as Forked Tongue said. Running Water looks up at the top of the lodge, or down at the robes on the ground, or he turns his back on Ugly Elk; but he never once rests his eyes on Ugly Elk or looks him in the face. An' the reason is this: Forked Tongue has told Running Water that Ugly Elk complained that Running Water's eye was evil; that his medicine told

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

him this; an' that he asked Forked Tongue to command Running Water not to look on him, the Ugly Elk, for ten wakes an' ten sleeps, when the evil would have gone out of his eye.

"An' the Ugly Elk," says Forked Tongue, "would tell you this himse'f, but he loves you so much it would make his soul sick, an' so he asks me."

Running Water, who is all truth, does not look for lies in any mouth, an' believes Forked Tongue, an' resolves for ten sleeps an' ten wakes not to rest his eyes on Ugly Elk.

When Ugly Elk notices how Running Water will not look on him, he chokes with anger, for he remembers he is hideous an' believes that Running Water laughs as Forked Tongue has told him. An' he grows so angry his mind is darkened an' his heart made as night. He seeks out the Forked Tongue an' says:

"Because I am weak with love for him, I cannot kill him with my hands. What shall I do, for he must die?"

Then Forked Tongue makes a long think an' as if he is hard at work inside his head. Then he gives this counsel to Ugly Elk:

"Send to your hunters where they are camped by the river. Say to them by your runner to seize on him who comes first to them in the morning, an' tie him to the big peeled pine an' burn him to death with wood. When the runner

THE BLACK LION INN.

is gone, say to Running Water that he must go to the hunters when the sun wakes up in the east an' ask them if they have killed an' cooked the deer you sent them. Since he will be the first to come, the hunters will lay hands on Running Water an' tie him an' burn him; an' that will put an end to his jests an' laughter over your ugliness."

Ugly Elk commands the Antelope, his runner, to hurry with word to the hunters to burn him to death who shall come first to them in the morning. Then he makes this word to Running Water that he must go to the hunters when the sun comes up an' ask if they have killed an' cooked the deer he sent them. Ugly Elk scowls like a cloud while he gives his directions to Running Water, but the boy does not see since his eyes are on the ground.

As the sun comes up, Running Water starts with the word of Ugly Elk to the hunters. But Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, is before him for his safety. Moh-Kwa knows that the way to stop a man is with a woman, so he has brought a young squaw of the lower Yellowstone who is so beautiful that her people named her the Firelight. Moh-Kwa makes the Firelight pitch camp where the trail of Running Water will pass as he goes to the hunters. An' the Wise Bear tells her what to say; an' also to have a turkey roasted, an' a pipe an' a soft blanket ready for Running Water.

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

When Running Water sees the Firelight, she is so beautiful he thinks it is a dream. An' when she asks him to eat, an' fills the redstone pipe an' spreads a blanket for him, the Running Water goes no further. He smokes an' rests on the blanket; an' because the tobacco is big medicine, Running Water falls asleep with his head in the lap of the Firelight.

When Forked Tongue knows that Running Water has started for the hunters, he waits. Then he thinks:

“Now the hunters, because I have waited long, have already burned Running Water. An' I will go an' see an' bring back one of the shin-bones to show Ugly Elk that he will never return.”

Forked Tongue travels fast; an' as he runs by the lodge of the Firelight, while it is a new lodge to him, he does not pause, for the lodge is closed so that the light will not trouble Running Water where he lies asleep with his head in the lap of the Firelight.

Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, is behind a tree as Forked Tongue trots past, an' he laughs deep in his hairy bosom; for Moh-Kwa likes revenge, an' he remembers how he was cheated of his bowl of molasses.

Forked Tongue runs by Moh-Kwa like a shadow an' never sees him, an' cannot hear him laugh.

When Forked Tongue comes to the hunters, they put their hands on him an' tie him to the

THE BLACK LION INN.

peeled pine tree. As they dance an' shout an' pile the brush an' wood about him, Forked Tongue glares with eyes full of fear an' asks:

"What is this to mean?" The hunters stop dancing an' say: "It means that it is time to sing the death song." With that they bring fire from their camp an' make a blaze in the twigs an' brush about Forked Tongue; an' the flames leap up as if eager to be at him—for fire hates a liar—an' in a litle time Forked Tongue is burned away an' only the ashes are left an' the big bones, which are yet white hot.

The sun is sinking when Running Water wakes an' he is much dismayed; but the Firelight cheers him with her dark eyes, an' Moh-Kwa comes from behind the tree an' gives him good words of wisdom; an' when he has once more eaten an' drunk an' smoked, he kisses the Firelight an' goes forward to the hunters as the Ugly Elk said.

An' when he comes to them, he asks:

"Have you killed an' cooked the deer which was sent you by the Ugly Elk?" An' the hunters laugh an' say: "Yes; he is killed an' cooked."

Then they take him to the peeled pine tree, an' tell him of Forked Tongue an' his fate; an' after cooling a great shin-bone in the river, they wrap it in bark an' grass an' say:

"Carry that to the Ugly Elk that he may know his deer is killed an' cooked."

While he is returning to Ugly Elk much dis-



THE
GREAT
CALIFORNIA

FORKED TONGUE.

THE NEW
AMERICAN

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

turbed, Moh-Kwa tells Running Water how Forked Tongue made his evil plan; an both Running Water when he hears, an' Ugly Elk when he hears, can hardly breathe for wonder. An' the Ugly Elk cannot speak for his great happiness when now that Running Water is still alive an' has not made a joke of his ugliness nor laughed. Also, Ugly Elk gives Moh-Kwa that bowl of molasses of which Forked Tongue would cheat him.

The same day, Moh-Kwa brings the Firelight to the lodge of Ugly Elk, an' she an' Running Water are wed; an' from that time she dwells in the tepee of Running Water, even unto the day when he is named Kill-Bear an' made chief after Ugly Elk is no more.

“It is ever,” said the Jolly Doctor, beaming from one to another to observe if we enjoyed Sioux Sam's story with as deep a zest as he did, “it is ever a wondrous pleasure to meet with these tales of a primitive people. They are as simple as the romaunts invented and told by children for the amusement of each other, and yet they own something of a plot, though it be the shallowest.”

“Commonly, too, they teach a moral lesson,” spoke up the Sour Gentleman, “albeit from what I know of savage morals they would not seem to

THE BLACK LION INN.

have had impressive effect upon the authors or their Indian listeners. You should know something of our Indians?"

Here the Sour Gentleman turned to the Old Cattleman, who was rolling a fresh cigar in his mouth as though the taste of tobacco were a delight.

"Me, savey Injuns?" said the Old Cattleman. "Which I knows that much about Injuns it gets in my way."

"What of their morals, then?" asked the Sour Gentleman.

"Plumb base. That is, they're plumb base when took from a paleface standp'int. Lookin' at 'em with the callous eyes of a savage, I reckons now they would mighty likely seem bleached a whole lot."

Discussion rambled to and fro for a time, and led to a learned disquisition on fables from the Jolly Doctor, they being, he said, the original literature of the world. With the end of it, however, there arose a request that the Sour Gentleman follow the excellent examples of the Jolly Doctor and Sioux Sam.

"But I've no invention," complained the Sour Gentleman. "At the best I could but give you certain personal experiences of my own; and those, let me tell you, are not always to my credit."

"Now I'll wager," spoke up the Red Nosed Gentleman, "now I'll wager a bottle of burgundy

HOW FORKED TONGUE WAS BURNED.

—and that reminds me I must send for another, since this one by me is empty—that your experiences are quite as glorious as my own; and yet, sir,”—here the Red Nosed Gentleman looked hard at the Sour Gentleman as though defying him to the tiltyard—“should you favor us, I’ll even follow you, and forage in the pages of my own heretofore and give you a story myself.”

“That is a frank offer,” chimed in the Jolly Doctor.

“There is no fault to be found with the offer,” said the Sour Gentleman; “and yet, I naturally hesitate when those stories of myself, which my poverty of imagination would compel me to give you, are not likely to grace or lift me in your esteem.”

“And what now do you suppose should be the illustrative virtues of what stories I will offer when I tell you I am a reformed gambler?”

This query was put by the Red Nosed Gentleman. The information thrown out would seem to hearten the Sour Gentleman not a little.

“Then there will be two black sheep at all events,” said the Sour Gentleman.

“Gents,” observed the Old Cattleman, decisively, “if it’ll add to the gen’ral encouragement, I’ll say right yere that in Arizona I was allowed to be some heinous myse’f. If this is to be a competition in iniquity, I aims to cut in on the play.”

“Encouraged,” responded the Sour Gentleman,

THE BLACK LION INN.

with just the specter of a vinegar smile, "by the assurance that I am like to prove no more ebon than my neighbors, I see nothing for it save to relate of the riches I made and lost in queer tobacco. I may add, too, that this particular incident carries no serious elements of wrong; it is one of my cleanest pages, and displays me as more sinned against than sinning."

CHAPTER IV.

THAT TOBACCO UPSET.

When the war was done and the battle flags of that confederacy which had been my sweetheart were rolled tight to their staves and laid away in mournful, dusty corners to moulder and be forgot, I cut those buttons and gold ends of braid from my uniform, which told of me as a once captain of rebels, and turned my face towards New York. I was twenty-one at the time; my majority arrived on the day when Lee piled his arms and surrendered to Grant at Appomatox. A captain at twenty-one? That was not strange, my friends, in a time when boys of twenty-two were wearing the wreath of a brigadier. The war was fought by boys, not men;—like every other war. Ah! I won my rank fairly, saber in fist; so they all said.

Those were great days. I was with O'Ferrell. There are one hundred miles in the Shenandoah, and backwards and forwards I've fought on its every foot. Towards the last, each day we fought, though both armies could see the end. We, for our side, fought with the wrath of despair; the Federals, with the glow of triumph in plain sight. Each day we fought; for if we did not go riding

THE BLACK LION INN.

down the valley hunting Sheridan, the sun was never over-high when he rode up the valley hunting us. Those were brave days! We fought twice after the war was done. Yes, we knew of Richmond's fall and that the end was come. But what then? There was the eager foe; there were we, sullen and ripe and hot with hate. Why should we not fight? So it befell that I heard those gay last bugles that called down the last grim charge; so it came that I, with my comrades, made the last gray line of battle for a cause already lost, and fought round the last standards of a confederacy already dead. Those were, indeed, good days—those last scenes were filled with the best and bravest of either side.

No; I neither regret nor repent the rebellion; nor do I grieve for rebellion's failure. All's well that well ends, and that carnage left us the better for it. For myself, I came honestly by my sentiments of the South. I was born in Virginia, of Virginians. One of my youthful recollections is how John Brown struck his blow at Harper's Ferry; how Governor Wise called out that company of militia of which I was a member; and how, as we stood in the lamp-lighted Richmond streets that night, waiting to take the road for Harper's Ferry, an old grotesque farmerish figure rushed excitedly into our midst. How we laughed at the belligerent agriculturist! No, he was no farmer; he was Wilkes Booth who, with the first

THAT TOBACCO UPSET.

whisper of the news, had come hot foot from the stage of Ford's Theater in his costume of that night to have his part with us. But all these be other stories, and I started to tell, not of the war nor of days to precede it, but about that small crash in tobacco wherein I had disastrous part.

When I arrived in New York my hopes were high, as youth's hopes commonly are. But, however high my hope, my pocket was light and my prospects nothing. Never will I forget how the mere sensation of the great city acted on me like a stimulant. The crowd and the breezy rush of things were as wine. Then again, to transplant a man means ever a multiplication of spirit. It was so with me; the world and the hour and I were all new together, and never have I felt more fervor of enterprise than came to me those earliest New York days. But still, I must plan and do some practical thing, for my dollars, like the hairs of my head, were numbered.

It was my seventh New York morning. As I sat in the café of the Astor House, my eye was caught by a news paragraph. The Internal Revenue law, with its tax of forty cents a pound on tobacco, had gained a construction, and the department's reading of the law at once claimed my hungriest interest. No tobacco grown prior to the crop of '66 was to be affected by the tax; that was the decision.

Aside from my saber-trade as a cavalryman,

THE BLACK LION INN.

tobacco was that thing whereof I exhaustively knew. I was a tobacco adept from the hour when the seed went into the ground, down to the perfumed moment when the perfect leaf exhaled in smoke. Moreover, I was aware of a trade matter in the nature of a trade secret, which might be made of richest import.

During those five red years of war, throughout the tobacco regions of the south, planting and harvesting, though crippled, had still gone forward. The fires of battle and the moving lines of troops had only streaked those regions ; they never wholly covered or consumed them. And wherever peace prevailed, the growing of tobacco went on. The harvests had been stored ; there was no market—no method of getting the tobacco out. To be brief, as I read the internal revenue decision above quoted, on that Astor House morning, I knew that scattered up and down Virginia and throughout the rest of the kindom of tobacco, the crops of full five years were lying housed, mouldy and mildewed, for the most part, and therefore cheap to whoever came with money in his hands. For an hour I sat over my coffee and made a plan.

There was a gentleman, an old college friend of my father. He was rich, avoided business and cared only for books. I had made myself known to him on the day of my arrival ; he had asked me, over a glass of wine, to let him hear from

THAT TOBACCO UPSET.

me as time and my destinies took unto themselves direction. For my tobacco plan I must have money; and I could think of no one save my father's friend of the books.

When I was shown into the old gentleman's library, I found him deeply held with Moore's *Life of Byron*. As he greeted me, he kept the volume in his left hand with finger shut in the page. Evidently he trusted that I would not remain long and that he might soon return to his reading.

The situation chilled me; I began my story with slight belief that its end would be fortunate. I exposed my tobacco knowledge, laid bare my scheme of trade, and craved the loan of five thousand dollars on the personal security—not at all commercial—of an optimist of twenty-one, whose only employment had been certain boot-and-saddle efforts to overthrow the nation. I say, I had scant hope of obtaining the aid I quested. I suffered disappointment. I was dealing with a gentleman who, however much he might grudge me a few moments taken from *Byron*, was willing enough to help me with money. In truth, he seemed relieved when he had heard me through; and he at once signed a check with a fine flourish, and I came from his benevolent presence equipped for those tobacco experiments I contemplated.

It is not required that I go with filmy detail into a re-count of my enterprise. I began safely and quietly; with my profits I extended myself;

THE BLACK LION INN.

and at the end of eighteen months, I had so pushed affairs that I was on the highway to wealth and the firm station of a millionaire.

I had personally and through my agents bought up those five entire war-crops of tobacco. Most of it was still in Virginia and the south, due to my order; much of it had been already brought to New York. By the simple process of steaming and vaporizing, I removed each trace of mould and mildew, and under my skillful methods that war tobacco emerged upon the market almost as sweet and hale as the best of our domestic stock; and what was vastly in its favor, its flavor was, if anything, a trifle mild.

In that day of leaf tobacco, the commodity was marketed in one-hundred-pound bales. My bales were made with ninety-two pounds of war tobacco, sweated free of any touch of mildew; and eight pounds of new tobacco, the latter on the outside for the sake of color and looks. Thus you may glimpse somewhat the advantage I had. Where, at forty cents a pound, the others paid on each bale of tobacco a revenue charge of forty dollars, I, with only eight pounds of new tobacco, paid but three dollars and twenty cents. And I had cornered the exempted tobacco. Is it wonder I began to wax rich?

Often I look over my account books of those brilliant eighteen months. When I read that news item on the Astor House morning I've indicated,

THAT TOBACCO UPSET.

I had carefully modeled existence to a supporting basis of ten dollars a week. When eighteen months later there came the crash, I was permitting unto my dainty self a rate of personal expenditure of over thirty thousand dollars a year. I had apartments up-town; I was a member of the best clubs; I was each afternoon in the park with my carriage; incidentally I was languidly looking about among the Vere de Veres of the old Knickerbockers for that lady who, because of her superlative beauty and wit and modesty coupled with youth and station, was worthy to be my wife. Also, I recall at this period how I was conceitedly content with myself; how I gave way to warmest self-regard; pitied others as dullards and thriftless blunderers; and privily commended myself as a very Caesar of Commerce and the one among millions. Alas! "Pride goeth"—you have read the rest!

It was a bright October afternoon. My comet-like career had subsisted for something like a year and a half; and I, the comet, was growing in size and brilliancy as time fled by. My tobacco works proper were over towards the East River in a brick warehouse I had leased; to these, which were under the superintendence of a trusty and expert adherent whom I had brought north from Richmond, I seldom repaired. My offices—five rooms, fitted and furnished to the last limit of

THE BLACK LION INN.

rosewood and Russia leather magnificence—were down-town.

On this particular autumn afternoon, as I went forth to my brougham for a roll to my apartments, the accountant placed in my hands a statement which I'd asked for and which with particular exactitude set forth my business standing. I remember it exceeding well. As I trundled up-town that golden afternoon, I glanced at those additions and subtractions which told my opulent story. Briefly, my liabilities were ninety thousand dollars; and I was rich in assets to a money value of three hundred and twelve thousand dollars. The ninety thousand was or would be owing on my tobacco contracts south, and held those tons on tons of stored, mildewed war tobacco, solid to my command. As I read the totals and reviewed the items, I would not have paid a penny of premium to insure my future. There it was in black and white. I knew what I had done; I knew what I could do. I was master of the tobacco situation for the next three years to come. By that time, I would have worked up the entire fragrant stock of leaf exempt from the tax; also by that time, I would count my personal fortune at a shadow over three millions. There was nothing surer beneath the sun. At twenty-six I would retire from trade and its troubles; life would lie at my toe like a kick-ball, and I would own both the wealth and the supple youth to

pursue it into every nook and corner of pleasurable experience. Thus ran my smug reflections as I rolled northward along Fifth avenue to dress for dinner on that bright October day.

It was the next afternoon, and I had concluded a pleasant lunch in my private office when Mike, my personal and favorite henchman, announced a visitor. The caller desired to see me on a subject both important and urgent.

"Show him in!" I said.

There slouched into the room an awkward-seeming man of middle age; not poor, but roughly dressed. No one would have called him a fop; his clothes, far astern of the style, fitted vilely; while his head, never beautiful, was made uglier with a shock of rudely exuberant hair and a stubby beard like pig's bristles. It was an hour when there still remained among us, savages who oiled their hair; this creature was one; and I remember how the collar of his rusty surtout shone like glass with the dripped grease.

My ill-favored visitor accepted the chair Mike placed for him and perched uneasily on its edge. When we were alone, I brought him and his business to instant bay. I was anxious to free myself of his presence. His bear's grease and jaded appearance bred a distaste of him.

"What is it you want?" My tones were brittle and sharp.

The uncouth caller leered at me with a fashion

THE BLACK LION INN.

of rancid leer—I suppose even a leer may have a flavor. Then he opened with obscure craft—vaguely, foggily. He wanted to purchase half my business. He would take an account of stock; give me exact money for one-half its value; besides, he would pay me a bonus of fifty thousand dollars.

If this unkempt barbarian had come squarely forth and told me his whole story; if, in short, I had known who he was and whom he came from, there would have grown no trouble. I would have gulped and swallowed the pill; we would have dealt; I'd have had a partner and been worth one and one-half million instead of three millions when my fortune was made. But he didn't. He shuffled and hinted and leered, and said over and over again as he repeated his offer:

“You need a partner.”

But beyond this he did not go; and of this I could make nothing, and I felt nothing save a cumulative resentment that kept growing the larger the longer he stayed. I told him I desired none of his partnership. I told him this several divers times; and each time with added vigor and a rising voice. To the last he persistently and leeringly retorted his offer; always concluding, like another Cato, with his eternal *Delenda est Carthago*.

“You need a partner!”

Even my flatterers have never painted me as

THAT TOBACCO UPSET.

patient, and at twenty-three my pulse beat swift and hot. And it came to pass that on the heels of an acrid ten minutes of my visitor, I brought him bluntly up.

“Go!” I said. “I’ve heard all I care to hear. Go; or I’ll have you shown the door!”

It was of no avail; the besotted creature held his ground.

I touched a bell; the faithful Mike appeared. It took no more than a wave of the hand; Mike had studied me and knew my moods. At once he fell upon the invader and threw him down stairs with all imaginable spirit.

Thereupon I breathed with vast relief, had the windows lifted because of bear’s grease that tainted the air, and conferred on the valorous Celt a reward of two dollars.

Who was this ill-combed, unctuous, oily, cloudy, would-be partner? He was but a messenger; two months before he had resigned a desk in the Washington Treasury—for appearances only—to come to me and make the proffer. After Mike cast him forth, he brushed the dust from his knees and returned to Washington and had his treasury desk again. He was a mere go-between. The one he stood for and whose plans he sought to transact was a high official of revenue. This latter personage, of whose plotting identity back in the shadows I became aware only when it was too late, noting my tobacco operations and their

THE BLACK LION INN.

profits and hawk-hungry for a share, had sent me the offer of partnership. I regret, for my sake as well as his own, that he did not pitch upon a more sagacious commissioner.

Now fell the bolt of destruction. The morning following Mike's turgid exploits with my visitor, I was met in the office door by the manager. His face was white and his eyes seemed goggled and fixed as if their possessor had been planet-struck. I stared at him.

"Have you read the news?" he gasped.

"What news?"

"Have you not read of the last order?"

Over night—for my visitor, doubtless, wired his discomfiture—the Revenue Department had reversed its decision of two years before. The forty cents per pound of internal revenue would from that moment be demanded and enforced against every leaf of tobacco then or thereafter to become extant; and that, too, whether its planting and its reaping occurred inter arma or took place beneath the pinions of wide-spreading peace. The revenue office declared that its first ruling, exempting tobacco grown during the war, had been taken criminal advantage of; and that thereby the nation in its revenue rights had been sorely defeated and pillaged by certain able rogues—meaning me. Therefore, this new rule of revenue right and justice.

Now the story ends. Under these changed,

severe conditions, when I was made to meet a tax of forty dollars where I'd paid less than a tithe of it before, I was helpless. I couldn't, with my inferior tobacco, engage on even terms against the new tobacco and succeed. My strength had dwelt in my power to undersell. This power was departed away; my locks as a Sampson were shorn.

But why spin out the hideous story? My market was choked up; a cataract of creditors came upon me; my liabilities seemed to swell while my assets grew sear and shrunken. Under the shaking jolt of that last new revenue decision, my fortunes came tumbling like a castle of cards.

After three months, I dragged myself from beneath the ruin of my affairs and stood—rather tottering—on my feet again. I was out of business. I counted up my treasure and found myself, debtless and unthreatened, master of some twenty thousand dollars.

And what then? Twenty thousand dollars is not so bad. It is not three millions; nor even half of three millions; but when all is said, twenty thousand is not so bad! I gave up my rich apartments, sold my horses, looked no more for a female Vere de Vere with intent her to espouse, and turned to smuggling. I had now a personal as well as a regional grudge against government. The revenue had cheated me; I would in revenge

THE BLACK LION INN.

cheat the revenue. I became a smuggler. That, however, is a tale to tell another day.

“And now,” observed the Red Nosed Gentleman, dipping deeply into his burgundy, as if for courage, “I’ll even keep my promise. I’ll tell a story of superstition and omen; also how I turned in my infancy to cards as a road to wealth. Cards as a method to arrive by riches is neither splendid nor respectable, but I shall make no apologies. I give you the story of The Sign of The Three.”

CHAPTER V.

THE SIGN OF THREE.

Such confession may come grotesquely enough from one of education and substance, yet all the day long I've been thinking on omens and on prophecies. It was my servant who brought it about. He, poor wretch! appeared in my chamber this morning with brows of terror and eyes of gloom. He had consulted a gypsy sorceress, whom the storm drove to cover in this tavern, and crossed the palm of her greed with a silver dollar to be told that he would die within the year. Information hardly worth the fee, truly! And the worst is, the shrinking fool believes the forebode and is already set about mending his lean estates for the change. What is still more strange, I, too, regard the word of this snow-blown witch—whoever the hag may be—and can no more eject her prophecies from my head than can the scared victim of them.

This business of superstition—a weakness for the supernatural—belongs with our bone and blood. Reason is no shield from its assaults. Look at Sir Thomas More; chopped on Tower Hill because he would believe that the blessed wafers

THE BLACK LION INN.

became of the Savior's actual flesh and blood! And yet, Sir Thomas wrote that most thoughtful of works, "Utopia," and was cunning enough of a hard-headed politics to succeed Wolsey as Chancellor.

Doubtless my bent to be superstitious came to me from my father. He was a miner; worked and lived on Tom's Run; and being from Wales, and spending his days in gloomy caverns of coal, held to those fantastic beliefs of his craft in elves and gnomes and brownies and other malignant, small folk of Demonland. However, it becomes not me to find fault with my ancestor nor speak lightly of his foibles. He was a most excellent parent; and it is one of my comforts, and one which neither my money nor my ease could bring, that I was ever a good son.

As I say, my father was a miner of coal. Each morning while the mines were open, lamp in hat, he repaired deep within the tunneled belly of the hill across from our cottage and with pick and blast delved the day long. This mine was what is called a "rail mine," and closed down its work each autumn to resume again in the spring. These beginnings and endings of mine activities depended on the opening and closing of navigation along the Great Lakes. When the lakes were open, the mines were open; when November's ice locked up the lakes, it locked up the mines as well, and my father and his fellows of the lamp were per-

THE SIGN OF THREE.

force idle until the warmth of returning spring again freed the keels and south breezes refilled the sails of commerce. As this gave my father but five to six months work a year; and as—at sixty cents a ton and pay for powder, oil, fuse and blacksmithing—he could make no more than forty dollars a month, we were poor enough.

Even the scant money he earned we seldom really fingered. The little that was not cheated out of my father's hands by the sins of diamond screens and untrue weights and other company tricks, was pounced on in advance by the harpies of "company store" and "company cottage," and what coins came to our touch never soared above the mean dignity of copper. Poor we were! a family of groats and farthings! poor as Lamb's "obolary Jew!"

It is not worth while for what I have in mind to dwell in sad extent on the struggles of my father or the aching shifts we made in my childhood to feed and clothe the life within our bodies. And yet, in body at least, I thrived thereby. I grew up strong and muscular; I boxed, wrestled and ran; was proficient as an athlete, and among other feats and for a slight wager—which was not made with my money, I warrant you!—swam eighteen miles in fresh water one Sunday afternoon.

While my muscles did well enough, our poverty would have starved my mind were it not for the parish priest. The question of books and schools

for me was far beyond my father's solution; he was eager that I be educated, but the emptiness of the family fisc forbade. It was then the good parish priest stepped forward and took me in earnest hand. Father Glennon deemed himself no little of an athlete, and I now believe that it was my supremacy in muscle among the boys of my age that first drew his eyes to me. Be that as it may, he took my schooling on himself; and night and day while I abode on Tom's Run—say until my seventeenth year—I was as tightly bound to the priest's books as ever Prometheus to his rock. And being a ready lad, I did my preceptor proud.

The good priest is dead now; I sought to put a tall stone above him but the bishop refused because it was too rich a mark for the dust of an humble priest. I had my way in part, however; I bought the plot just across the narrow gravel walk from the grave that held my earliest, best friend, and there, registering on its smooth white surface my debt to Father Glennon, stands the shaft. I carved on it no explanation of the fact that it is only near and not over my good priest's bones. Those who turn curious touching that matter may wend to the bishop or to the sexton, and I now and then hear that they do.

No; I did not go into the coal holes. My father forbade it, and I lacked the inclination as well. By nature I was a speculator, a gambler if you will. I like uncertainties; I would not lend money

THE SIGN OF THREE.

at five hundred per cent., merely because one knows in advance the measure of one's risks and profits. I want a chance to win and a chance to lose; for I hold with the eminent gamester Charles Fox that while to win offers the finest sensation of which the human soul is capable, the next finest comes when you lose. Congenitally I was a courtier of Fortune and a follower of the gospel of chance. And this inborn mood has carried me through a score of professions until, as I tell you this, I have grown rich and richer as a stock speculator, and hang over the markets a pure gambler of the tape. I make no apology; I simply point to the folk who surround me.

My vocation of a gambler—for what else shall one call a speculator of stocks?—has doubtless fattened my tendencies towards the superstitious. I've witnessed much surely, that should go to their strengthening. Let me tell you a story somewhat in line with the present current of my thoughts; it may reach some distance to teach you with Horatio that there be more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. After all, it is the cold record of one of a hundred score of incidents that encourage my natural belief in the occult.

There is a gentleman of stocks—I've known him twenty years—and he has a weakness for the numeral three. Just how far his worship of that

THE BLACK LION INN.

sacred number enters into his business life no one may certainly tell; he is secretive and cautious and furnishes no evidence on the point that may be covered up. Yet this weakness, if one will call it so, crops up in sundry fashions. His offices are suite three, in number thirty-three Blank street; his telephones are 333 and 3339 respectively; his great undertakings are invariably deferred in their commencements until the third of the month.

His peculiar and particular fetich, however, is a chain of three hundred and thirty-three gold beads. It is among the wonders of the street. This was made for him and under his direction by Tiffany, and cost one workman something over a year of his life in its construction. It is all hand and hammer work, this chain; and on each bead is drawn with delicate and finished art a gypsy girl's head. Under a microscope this gypsy face is perfect and the entire jewel worthy the boast of the Tiffany house as a finest piece of gold-beater's work turned out in modern times.

It is a listless, warm evening at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Our believer in "Three" is gathered casually with two of his friends. There is no business abroad; those missions which called our gentleman of the gypsy chain up-town are all discharged; he is off duty—unbuckled, as it were, in cheerful, light converse over a bottle of wine. Let us name our friend of the Three, "James of the

THE SIGN OF THREE.

Beads;" while his duo of comrades may be Reed and Rand respectively.

Such is man's inconsistency that James of the Beads is railing at Reed who has told—with airs of veneration if not of faith—of a "system," that day laid bare to him, warranted to discover in excellent rich advance, the names of the winning horses in next day's races. James of the Beads laughs, while Reed feebly defends his credulity in lending the countenance of half belief to the "system" he describes.

Then a sudden impulse takes James of the Beads. His face grows grave while his eye shows deepest thought.

"To-morrow is the third of the month?" observes James of the Beads. Now with emphasis: "Gentlemen, I'll show you how to select a horse." Then to Reed, who holds in his hands the racing list: "Look for to-morrow's third race!" Reed finds it.

"What is the third horse?"

"Roysterer."

"Roysterer!" repeats James of the Beads. "Good! There are nine letters in the name; three syllables; three r's!"

Then James of the Beads seizes with both hands, in a sort of ecstatic catch as catch can, on the gypsy chain of magic. He holds a bead between the thumb and fore-finger of each hand. Softly he counts the little yellow globes between.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Thirty-three!” ejaculates James of the Beads. Deeper lights begin to shine in his eye. One test of the chain, however, is not enough. He must make three. A second time he takes a bead between each fore-finger and thumb; on this trial the two beads are farther apart. Again he counts, feeling each golden bullet with his finger’s tip as the tally proceeds.

“Sixty-six!”

There arrives a glow on the brow of James of the Beads to keep company with the gathering sparkle of his eye. The questioning of the witch-chain goes on. Again he seizes the beads; again he tells the number.

“Ninety-nine!”

The prophecy is made; the story of success is foretold. James of the Beads is on fire; he springs to his feet. Rand and Reed regard him in silence, curiously. He walks to a window and sharply gazes out on the lamp-sprinkled evening.

“Twenty-third street! Fifth avenue! Broadway!” he mutters. “Still three—always three!”

Unconsciously James of the Beads seeks the window-shade with his hand. He would raise it a trifle; it is low and interrupts the eye as he stands gazing into the trio of thoroughfares. The tassel he grasps is old and comes off in his fingers. James of the Beads turns his glance on the tassel.

“That, too, has its meaning,” says James of the Beads, “if only we might read it.”

THE SIGN OF THREE.

The tassel is a common, poor creature of worsted yarns and strands wrapped about a clumsy mold of wood. James of the Beads scans it narrowly as it lies in his hand. At last he turns it, and the fringe falls away from the wooden mold. There is a little "3" burned upon the wood. James of the Beads exhibits this sacred sign to Reed and Rand; the while his excited interest deepens. Then he counts the strands of worsted which constitute the fringe. There are eighty-one!

"Three times three times three times three!" and James of the Beads draws a deep breath.

Who might resist these spectral manifestations of "Three!" James of the Beads turns from the window like one whose decision is made. Without a word he takes a slip of paper from his pocket book and going to the table writes his name on its back. It is a pleasant-seeming paper, this slip; and pleasantly engraved and written upon. No less is it than a New York draft drawn on the City National Bank by a leading Chicago concern for an even one hundred thousand dollars. James of the Beads places it in the hands of Rand.

"To-morrow should be the luckiest of days," says James of the Beads. "I must not lose it. I must consider to-morrow and arrange to set afoot certain projects which I've had in train for some time. As to the races, Rand, take the draft and put it all on Roysterer."

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Man alive!” remonstrates the amazed Rand; “it’s too much on one horse! Moreover, I won’t have time to get all that money down.”

“Get down what you can then,” commands James of the Beads. “Plunge! Have no fears! I tell you, so surely as the sun comes up, Roysterer will win.”

“The wise ones don’t think so,” urges Rand, who is not wedded to the mystic “Three,” and beholds nothing wondrous in that numeral. “This Roysterer is a seven for one shot.”

“And the better for us,” retorts James of the Beads. “Roysterer is to win.”

“But wouldn’t it be wiser to split this money and play part of it on Roysterer for a place?”

“Never!” declares James of the Beads. “Do you suppose I don’t know what I’m about? I’m worth a million for each year of my life, and I made every stiver of it by the very method I take to discover this horse. Can’t you see that I’m not guessing?—that I have reason for what I do? Roysterer for a place! Never! get down every splinter that Roysterer finishes first.”

“Let me ask one question,” observes the cautious Rand. “Do you know the horse?”

“Never heard of the animal in my life!” remarks James of the Beads, pouring himself a complacent glass. This he tastes approvingly. “You must pardon me, my friends, I’ve got to write a note or two. I’ve not too much time for a man

THE SIGN OF THREE.

with twenty things to do, and who must be in the street when business opens to-morrow. Take my word for it; get all you can on Roysterer. If we win, we're partners; if we lose, I'm alone."

Rand shakes sage, experienced head, while his face gathers a cynical look.

Reed and Rand take James of the Beads by the hand and then withdraw.

"What do you make of it?" asks Rand.

"The man's infatuated!" replies Reed.

"And yet, you also believe in systems," remarks Rand.

It is the next afternoon. The Brighton course is rampant with the usual jostling, pushing, striving, guessing, knowing, wagering, winning, losing, ignorant, exulting, deploring, profane crowd. The conservative Rand has so far obeyed the behest of James of the Beads that he has fifteen thousand dollars on Roysterer straight.

"To lose fifteen thousand won't hurt him," says Rand, and so consoles himself for a mad speculation whereof he has no joy.

Reed and Rand, as taking life easily, are in a box; the race over which their interest clings and clammers is called.

The horses are at the post. Roysterer does not act encouragingly; he is too sleepy—too lethargic! Starlight, the favorite, steps about, alert and springy as a cat; it should be an easy race for her if looks go for aught.

THE BLACK LION INN.

They get the word; they are "off!" The field sweeps 'round the curve. A tall man in a nearby box follows the race with a glass.

"At the quarter," sings the tall man. "Starlight first, Blenheim second, Roysterer third!" There is a pause. Then the tall man: "At the half! Starlight first, Blenheim second, Roysterer third!" Rand turns to Reed. "He must better that," says Rand, "or he'll explode the superstition of our friend." There is a wait of twenty-five seconds. Again the tall, binocularized man: "Three-quarter post! Starlight first, Blenheim second, Roysterer third—and whipping!"

"It's as good as over," observes Rand. "I wonder what James of the Beads will say to his witch-chain when he hears the finish."

"It's surprising," remarks Reed peevishly, "that a man of his force and clear intelligence should own to such a weakness! All his life he's followed this marvelous 'Three' about; and having had vast success he attributes it to the 'Three,' when he might as well and as wisely ascribe it to Captain Kidd or Trinity church. To-day's results may cure him; and that's one comfort."

There is a sharp click as the tall man in the nearby box shuts up his glasses.

"Roysterer wins!" says the tall man.

"Got down fifteen thousand. Won one hundred and five thousand," reads James of the Beads from Rand's telegram sent from the track. James

THE SIGN OF THREE.

of the Beads is in his offices; he has just finished a victorious day, at once heavy and tumultuous with the buying and the selling of full three hundred thousand shares of stocks. "They should have wagered the full one hundred thousand and let the odds look after themselves," he says. Then James of the Beads begins to caress the gypsy chain. "You knew," he murmurs; "of course, you knew!" There is a note of devotion in the tones. The bead-worship goes on for a silent moment. "Only one hundred and five thousand!" ruminates James of the Beads. "I suppose Rand was afraid!"

"That is indeed a curious story," observed the Jolly Doctor, when the Red Nosed Gentleman, being done with James of the Beads, was returning to his burgundy; "and did it really happen?"

"Of a verity, did it," returned the Red Nosed Gentleman. "I was Rand."

Conversation fluttered from one topic to another for a brief space, but dealt mainly with those divers superstitions that folk affect. When signs and omens were worn out, the Jolly Doctor turned upon the Old Cattleman as though to remind that ancient practitioner of cows how it would be now his right to uplift us with a reminiscence.

"No, I don't need to be told it none," said the

THE BLACK LION INN.

Old Cattleman. “ On the principle of freeze-out, it’s shore got down to me. Seein’ how this yere snow reminds me a heap of Christmas, I’ll onload on you-all how we’re aroused an’ brought to a realisin’ sense of that season of gifts once upon a time in Wolfville.”

CHAPTER VI.

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

This yere can't be called a story; which it can't even be described none as a sketch. Accordin' to the critics, who, bein' plumb onable to write one themse'fs, nacherally knows what a story ought to be, no story's a story onless she's built up like one of these one-sided hills. Reelation must climb painfully from base to peak, on the slope side, with interest on a up-grade, say, of one foot in ten; an' then when you-all arrives safely at the summit, the same bein' the climax, you're to pitch headlong over the precipice on the sheer an' other side, an' in the space of not more'n a brace of sentences, land, bing! bang! smash!—all broke up at the bottom. That, by what you-all might call "Our best literary lights," would be a story, an' since what I'm about to unfold don't own no sech brands nor y'ear-marks, it can't come onder that head.

This partic'lar o'casion is when little Enright Peets Tutt—said blessed infant, as I sets forth former, bein' the conj'int production of Dave Tutt an' his esteemable wife, Tucson Jennie—is comin'

THE BLACK LION INN.

eight years old next spring round-up. Little Enright Peets is growin' strong an' husky now, an' is the pride of the Wolfville heart. He's shed his milk teeth an' is sproutin' a second mouthful, white an' clean as a coyote's. Also, his cur'osity is deeveloped powerful an' he's in the habit of pervadin' about from the Red Light to the New York Store, askin' questions; an' he is as familiar in the local landscape as either the Tucson stage or Old Monte, the drunkard who drives it.

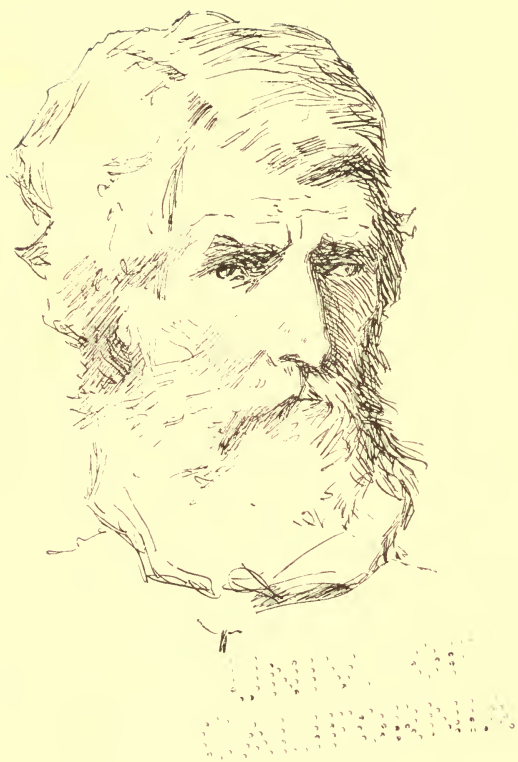
One afternoon, about first drink time, little Enright Peets comes waddlin' up to Old Man Enright on them short reedic'lous black-b'ar laigs of his, an' says:

"Say, gran'dad Enright, don't you-all cimmarons never have no Christmas in this camp? Which if you does, all I got to say is I don't notice no Christmas none since I've been yere, an' that's whatever!"

"Will you-all listen to this preecocious child!" observes Enright to Doc Peets, with whom he's in talk. "Wherever now do you reckon, Doc, he hears tell of Christmas?"

"How about it, Uncle Doc?" asks little Enright Peets, turnin' his eyes up to Peets when he notices Enright don't reply.

At this Enright an' Peets makes a disparin' gesture an' wheels into the Red Light for a drink, leavin' pore little Enright Peets standin' in the street.



OLD MAN ENRIGHT.

70. 1891
Alfred W.

THAT WOLFBVILLE CHRISTMAS.

"That baby puts us to shame, Doc," says Enright, as he signs up to Black Jack, the barkeep, for the Valley Tan; "he shows us in one word how we neglects his eddication. The idee of that child never havin' had no Christmas! It's more of a stain on this commoonity than not hangin' Navajo Joe that time."

"That's whatever!" assents Peets, reachin' for the nose-paint in his turn. "' Out of the mouths of babes an' sucklin's,' as the good book says."

This infantile bluff of little Enright Peets goes a long way to stir up the sensibilities of the public. As for Enright, he don't scroople to take Dave Tutt to task.

"The thought that you, Dave," says Enright, "you, a gent I yeretofore regyards as distinguished for every paternal virchoo, would go romancin' along, lettin' that boy grow up in darkness of Christmas, an' it one of the first festivals of the Christian world! As a play, I says freely, that sech neglect is plumb too many for me!"

"She's shore a shame," adds Dan Boggs, who's also shocked a heap, and stands in with Enright to crawl Dave's hump, "she's shore a shame, never to provide no Christmas for that offspring of yours, an' leave him to go knockin' about in his ignorance like a blind dog in a meat shop. That's what I states; she's a shame!"

"Now gents," reemonstrates Dave, "don't press the limit in these yere reecrim'nations, don't

THE BLACK LION INN.

crowd me too hard. I asks you, whatever could I do? If you-all enthoosiasts will look this yere Christmas proposition ca'mly in the face, you'll begin to notice that sech cel'brations ain't feasible in Arizona. Christmas in its very beginnin' is based on snow. Who's the reg'lar round-up boss for Christmas? Ain't he a disrepootable Dutchman named Santa Claus? Don't he show up wrapped in furs, an' with reindeer an' sleigh an' hock deep in a snowstorm? Answer me that? Also show me where's your snow an' where's your sleigh an' where's your reindeer an' where's your Dutchman in Wolfville? You-all better go about fixin' up your camp an' your climate so as to make one of these Christmases possible before ever you come buttin' in, cavilin' an' criticisin' ag'in me as a parent."

"Which jest the same, Dave," contends Dan, who takes the eepisode mighty sour, "it looks like you-all could have made some sort o' play."

About this time, as addin' itse'f to the gen'ral jolt given the Wolfville nerve by them Christmas questions put aforesaid by little Enright Peets, news comes floatin' over from Red Dog of a awful spree that low-flung outfit enjoys. It's a Six Shooter Weddin'; so deenominated because Pete Bland, the outlaw for whom the party is made, an' his wife, The Duchess, has been married six years an' ain't done nothin' but fight. Wherefore, on the sixth anniversary of their nup-

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

tials, Red Dog resolves on a Six Shooter Weddin'; an' tharupon descends on those two wedded warriors, Pete an' The Duchess, in a body, packin' fiddles, nose-paint, an' the complete regalia of a frantic shindig. An' you hear me, gents, them Red Dog tarrapins shore throws themse'fs loose! You-all could hear their happy howls in Wolfville.

As a reason for the outburst, an' one consistent with its name, the guests endows Pete an' The Duchess each with belts an' a brace of guns.

"To the end," says the Red Dog cha'rman when he makes the presentation speech, "that, as between Pete an' The Duchess, we as a commoonity promotes a even break, and clothes both parties in interest with equal powers to preserve the peace."

As I observes, it's the story of these proud doin's on the locoed part of our rival, that ondoubted goes some distance to decide us Wolves of Wolfville on pullin' off a Christmas warjig for little Enright Peets. We ain't goin' to be outdone none in this business of being fervid.

It's mebbly a month prior to Christmas when we resolves on this yere racket, an' so we has ample time to prepare. Almost every afternoon an' evenin' over our Valley Tan, we discusses an' does our wisest to evolve a programme. It's then we begins to grasp the wisdom of Dave's observations touchin' how onfeasible it is to go talkin' of Christmas in southern Arizona.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“ Nacherally,” remarks Enright, as we sits about the Red Light, turnin’ the game in our minds, “ nacherally, we ups an’ gives little Enright Peets presents. Which brings us within ropin’ distance of the inquiry, ‘ Whatever will we give him? ’ ”

“ We-all can’t give him fish-lines, an’ sech,” says Doc Peets, takin’ up Enright’s argument, “ for thar ain’t no fish. Skates is likewise barred, thar bein’ no ice ; an’ sleds an’ mittens an’ worsted comforters an’ fur caps fails us for causes sim’lar. Little Enright Peets is too young to smoke ; Tucson Jennie won’t let him drink lickier ; thar, with one word, is them two important sources closed ag’in us. Gents, I’m inclined to string my bets with Dave ; I offers two for one as we sets yere, that this framin’ up a Christmas play in Arizona as a problem ain’t no slouch.”

“ Thar’s picture books,” says Faro Nell.

“ Shore ! ” assents Cherokee Hall, where he’s planted back of his faro box.

“ An’ painted blocks ! ”

“ Good ! ” says Cherokee.

“ An’ candy ! ”

“ Nell’s right ! ” an’ Cherokee coincides plumb through. “ Books, blocks, an’ candy, is what I calls startin’ on velvet.”

“ Whatever’s the matter,” says Dan Boggs, who’s been rackin’ his intellects a heap, “ of givin’ little Enright Peets a faro layout, or mebbly now,

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

a roolette wheel? Some of them wheels is mighty gaudy furniture!"

"Dan," says Enright, an' his tones is severe; "Dan, be you-all aimin' to corrupt this child?" Dan subsides a whole lot after this yere reproof.

"I don't reckon now," observes Jack Moore, an' his manner is as one ropin' for information; "I don't reckon now a nice, wholesome Colt's-44, ivory butt, stamped leather belts, an' all that, would be a proper thing to put in play. Of course, a 8-inch gun is some heavy as a plaything for a infant only seven; but he'd grow to it, gents, he'd grow to it."

"Don't alloode to sech a thing, Jack," says Dan, with a shudder; "don't alloode to it. Little Enright Peets would up an' blow his yoothful light out; an' then Tucson Jennie would camp on our trails forevermore as the deestroyers of her child. The mere idee gives me the fantods!" An' Dan, who's a nervous party, shudders ag'in.

"Gents," says Texas Thompson, "I ain't cut in on this talk for two reasons: one is I ain't had nothin' to say; an' ag'in, it was Christmas Day when my Laredo wife—who I once or twice adverts to as gettin' a divorce—ups an' quits me for good. For which causes it has been my habit to pass up all mention an' mem'ry of this sacred season in a sperit of silent pra'r. But time has so far modified my feelin's that, considerin' the present purposes of the camp, I'm willin' to be

THE BLACK LION INN.

heard. Thar's nothin' that should be looked to more jealously than this yere givin' of presents. It's grown so that as a roole the business of makin' presents degen'rates to this: Some sport who can't afford to, gives some sport something he don't need. Thar's no fear of the first, since we gents can afford anything we likes. As to the second prop'sition, we should skin our kyards some sharp. We-all ought to lavish on little Enright Peets a present which, while safegyardin' his life an' his morals, is calc'lated to teach him some useful accomplishments. Books, blocks, an sweet-meats, as proposed by our fac'natin' townswoman, Miss Faro Nell"—Nell tosses Texas a kiss—"is in admir'ble p'int as coverin' a question of amooze-ments. For the rest, an' as makin' for the deevel-opment of what will be best in the character of little Enright Peets, I moves you we-all turns in an' buys that baby the best bronco—saddle, bridle, rope an' spurs, complete—that the southwest affords."

Texas, who's done stood up to make this yere oration, camps down ag'in in the midst of a storm of applause. The su'gestion has immediate adoption.

We-all gives a cold thousand for the little hoss. We gets him of the sharp who—it bein' in the old day before railroads—is slammin' through the mails from Chihuahua to El Paso, three hundred miles in three nights. This bronco—he's a deep

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

bay, shadin' off into black like one of them over-ripe violins, an' with nostrils like red expandin' hollyhocks—can go a hundred miles between dark an' dark, an' do it three days in a week. Which he's shore a wonder, is that little hoss; an' the saddle an' upholstery that goes with him, Spanish leather an' gold, is fit for his company.

As Dan leads him up in front of the Red Light Christmas Eve for us to look at, he says:

“Gents, if he ain't a swallow-bird on four legs, then I never sees no sech fowl; an' the only drawback is that, considerin' the season, we can't hang him on no tree.”

An' yere, now, is where we-all gets scared up. It spoils the symmetry of this story to chunk it in this a-way; but I can't he'p myse'f, for this story, like that tale of James of the Beads, is troo.

Jest as we-all is about to prounce down with our gifts on Dave's wickeyup like a mink on a settin' hen—Dan bein' all framed an' frazzled up in cow-tails an' buffalo horns like a Injun medicine man, thinkin' to make the deal as Santa Claus—Tucson Jennie comes surgin' up, wild an' frantic, an' allows little Enright Peets is lost. Dave, she says, is chargin' about, tryin' to round him up.

“Which I knows he's done been chewed up by wolves,” says Tucson Jennie, wringin' her hands an' throwin' her apron over her head. “He'd shore showed up for supper if he's alive.”

It's obvious that before that Christmas can pro-

THE BLACK LION INN.

ceed, we-all has got to recover the beneficiary. Thar's a gen'ral saddlin' up, an' in no time Wolfville's population is spraddlin' about the surroundin' scenery.

It comes right though, an' it's Dan who makes the turn. Dan discovers little Enright Peets camped down in the lee of a mesquite bush, seven miles out on his way to the Floridas mountains. He puts it up he's goin' over to the hills to have a big talk an' make medicine with Moh-Kwa, the wise medicine b'ar that Sioux Sam yere has been reelatin' to him about.

No, that child ain't scared none; he's takin' it cool an' contented, with twenty coyotes settin' about, blinkin' an' silent on their tails, an' lookin' like they're sort o' thinkin' little Enright Peets over an' tryin' to figger out his system. Them little wolves don't onderstand what brings that infant out alone on the plains, that a-way ; an' they're cogitatin' about it when Dan disperses 'em to the four winds.

That's all thar is to the yarn. Little Enright Peets is packed into camp an' planted in the midst of them books an' blocks an' candies which Faro Nell su'gests ; also, he's made happy with the little hoss. Dan, in his medicine mask an' paint, does a skelp dance, an' is the soul of the hour.

Little Enright Peets' joy is as wide as the territory. Despite reemonstrance, he insists on gettin' into that gold-embossed saddle an' givin' his

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

little hoss a whirl 'round the camp. Dan rides along to head off stampedes.

On the return, little Enright Peets comes down the street like an arrow an' pulls up short. As Dave searches him out of the saddle, he says:

“Paw, that cayouse could beat four kings an' a ace.”

That's reward enough; Wolfville is never more pleased than the night it opens up to little Enright Peets the beauties which lies hid in Christmas. An' the feelin' that we-all has done this, sort o' glorifies an' gilds the profound deebauch that en-soos. Tucson Jennie lays it down that it's shore the star Christmas, since it's the one when her lost is found an' the Fates in the guise of Dan presents her with her boy ag'in. I knows of myse'f, gents, that Jennie is shore moved, for she omits utter to lay for Dave with reproaches when, givin' way to a gen'rous impulse, he issues forth with the rest of the band, an' relaxes into a picnic that savors of old days.

“My friends,” observed the Jolly Doctor, as we were taking our candles preparatory for bed, the hour having turned towards the late, “I shall think on this as an occasion of good company. And to-morrow evening—for this storm will continue to hold us prisoners—you will find unless

THE BLACK LION INN.

better offer, I shall recognize my debt to you by attempting a Christmas story myself. I cannot stir your interest as has our friend of camps and trails with his Wolfville chapter, but I shall do what lies in me."

"You will tell us of some Christmas," hazarded the Sour Gentleman, "that came beneath your notice as a professional man."

"Oh, no; not that," returned the Jolly Doctor. "This is rather a story of health and robust strength than any sick-bed tale. It is of gloves and fighting men who never saw a doctor. I shall call it 'The Pitt Street Stringency.'"

It was eight of the clock on the second evening when we gathered about the fire-place. The snow was still falling and roads were reported blocked beyond any thought of passage. We were snow-bound; folk who should know declared that if a road were broken for our getting out within a week, it was the best we might look for.

No one seemed stricken of grief at this prison prospect. As we came about the cheery blaze, every face was easy and content. The Jolly Doctor joined the Red Nosed Gentleman in his burgundy, while the Sour Gentleman and the Old Cattleman qualified for the occasion with a copious account of whiskey, which the aged man of cows called "Nose-paint." Sioux Sam and I were the only "abstainers"—I had ceased and he had never

THAT WOLFVILLE CHRISTMAS.

commenced—but as if to make up, we smoked a double number of cigars.

The Jolly Doctor began with the explanation that the incidents he would relate had fallen beneath his notice when as a student he walked the New York hospitals; then, glass in hand, he told us the tale of The Pitt Street Stringency.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

“Another would-be sooicide, eh! Here, Kid,” to a sharp gamin who does errands and odd commissions for the house; “take this mut in where dey kills ’em.”

The speaker is a loud young man, clad in garments of violence. The derby tilted over eye, the black cigar jutting ceilingward at an angle of sixty degrees, the figured shirt whereof a dominating dye is angry red, the high collar and flash tie, with its cheap stone, all declare the Bowery. As if to prove the proposition announced of his costume, the young man is perched on a stool, the official ticket-seller of a Bowery theatre.

Mike Menares, whom the Bowery person alludes to as the “mut,” is a square-shouldered boy of eighteen; handsome he is as Apollo, yet with a slow, good-humored guilelessness of face. He has come on business bent. That mighty pugilist, the Dublin Terror, is nightly on the stage, offering two hundred dollars to any amateur among boxers who shall remain before him four Queensberry rounds. Mike Menares, he of the

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

candidly innocent countenance, desires to proffer himself as a sacrifice.

“Youse is just in time, sport,” remarks the brisk gamin to whom Mike has been committed, as he pilots the guileless one to the stage door. “It’s nine o’clock now, an’ d’ Terror goes on to do his bag-t’umpin’ turn at ten. After that comes d’ knockin’ out, see! But say! if youse was tired of livin’, why didn’t you jump in d’ East river? I’d try d’ river an’ d’ morgue before I’d come here to be murdered be d’ Terror.”

Mike makes no retort to this, lacking lightness of temper. His gamin conductor throws open the stage door and signals Mike to enter.

“Tell d’ butcher here’s another calf for him,” vouchsafes the gamin to the stage-hands inside the door.

Let us go back four hours to a three-room tenement in Pitt Street. There are two rooms and a little kennel of a kitchen. The furnishings are rough and cheap and clean. The lady of the tenement, as the floors declare, is a miracle of soap and water. And the lady is little Mollie Lacy, aged eleven years.

The family of the Pitt Street tenement is made up of three. There is Mike Menares, our hero; little Mollie; and, lastly, her brother Davy, aged nine. Little Davy is lame. He fell on the tenement stairs four years before and injured his hip. The hospital doctors took up the work where the

THE BLACK LION INN.

tenement stairs left off, and Davy came from his sick-bed doomed to a crutch for life.

Mike Menares is half-brother of the younger ones. Nineteen years before, Mike's mother, Irish, with straw-colored hair and blue eyes, wedded one Menares, a Spanish Jew. This fortunate Menares was a well-looking, tall man; with hair black and stiffening in a natural pompadour. He kept a tobacco stall underneath a stair in Park Row, and was accounted rich by the awfully poor about him. He died, however, within the year following Mike's birth; and thus there was an end to the rather thoroughbred dark Spanish Jew.

Mike's mother essayed matrimony a second time. She selected as a partner in this experiment a shiftless, idle, easy creature named David Lacy, who would have been a plasterer had not his indolence defeated his craft. Little Mollie, and Davy of the clattering crutch, occurred as a kind of penalty of the nuptials.

Three years and a half before we encounter this mixed household, Lacy, the worthless, sailed away on a China ship without notice or farewell. Some say he was "shanghaied," and some that he went of free will. Mrs. Lacy adopted the former of the two theories.

"David Lacy, too idle to work ashore, assuredly would not go to sea where work and fare are tenfold harder."

Thus argued Mrs. Lacy. Still, a solution of

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

Lacy's reasons for becoming a mariner late in life is not here important. He sailed and he never returned; and as Mrs. Lacy perished of pneumonia the following winter, they both may be permitted to quit this chronicle to be meddled with by us no further.

Mike Menares had witnessed fifteen years when his mother died. As suggested, he is a singularly handsome boy, and of an appearance likely to impress. From his Conemara mother, he received a yellow head of hair. Underneath are a pair of jet black brows, a hawkish nose, double rows of strong white teeth, and deep soft black eyes, as honest as a hound's, the plain bestowal of his Jewish father.

Mike was driving a delivery wagon for the great grocers, Mark & Milford, when his mother died. This brought six dollars a week. After the sad going of his mother, Mike found a second situation where he might work evenings, and thereby add six further dollars to that stipend from Mark & Milford. This until the other day continued. On twelve dollars a week, and with little Mollie—a notable housekeeper—to manage for the Pitt Street tenement, the composite house of Menares and Lacy fared well.

Mike's evening labors require a description. One Sarsfield O'Punch, an expert of boxing and an athlete of some eminence, maintains a private gymnasium on Fifty-ninth street. This personage

THE BLACK LION INN.

is known to his patrons as "Professor O'Punch." Mike, well-built and lithe, broad of shoulder, deep of lung, lean of flank, a sort of half-grown Hercules, finds congenial employ as aid to Professor O'Punch. Mike's primal duty is to box with those amateurs of the game who seek fistic enlightenment of his patron, and who have been carried by that scientist into regions of half-wisdom concerning the bruising art for which they moil. From eight o'clock until eleven, Mike's destiny sets him, one after the other, before a full score of these would-be boxers, some small and some big, some good and some bad, some weak and some strong, but all zealous to a perspiring degree. These novices smite and spare not, and move with all their skill and strength to pummel Mike. They have, be it said, but indifferent success; for Mike, waxing expert among experts, side-steps and blocks and stops and ducks and gets away; and his performances in these defensive directions are the whisper of the school.

Now and then he softly puts a glove on some eager face, or over some unguarded heart, or feather-like left-hooks some careless jaw, to the end that the other understand a peril and fend against it. But Mike, working lightly as a kitten, hurts no one; such being the private commands of Professor O'Punch who knows that to pound a pupil is to lose a pupil.

It is to be doubted if the easy-natured Mike

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

is aware of his wonderful strength of arm and body, or the cat-like quickness and certainty of his blows. During these three years wherein he has been underling to Professor O'Punch, Mike strikes but two hard blows. One evening several of the followers of Professor O'Punch are determining their prowess on a machine intended to register the force of a blow. Following each other in a fashion of punching procession, these aspiring gymnasts, putting their utmost into the swings, strike with all steam. Four hundred to five hundred pounds says the register; this is vaunted as a vastly good account.

Mike, with folded arms and stripped to ring costume—his official robes—is looking on, a smile lighting his pleasant face. Mike is ever interested and ever silent.

As the others smite, Mike beams with approval, but makes no comment. At last one observes:

“Menares, how many pounds can you strike?”

“I don't know,” replies Mike, in a surprised way, “I never tried.”

“Try now,” says the other; “I've a notion you could hit hard enough if you cared to.”

The others second the speaker. Much and instant curiosity grows up as to what Mike can do with his hands if he puts his soul into it. There is not an amateur about but knows more of Mike than does the latter of himself. They know him as one perfect of defensive boxing; also, they

THE BLACK LION INN.

recall the precise feather-like taps which Mike confers on the best of their muster whenever he chooses; but none has a least of knowledge of how bitterly hard Mike's glove might be sent home should ever his heart be given to the trial.

Being urged, Mike begins to rouse; he himself grows curious. It has never come to him as a thought to make the experiment. The "punching machine" has stood there as part of the paraphernalia of the gymnasium. But to the fog-witted Mike, who comes to work for so many dollars a week and who has not once considered himself in the light of a boxer, whether excellent or the reverse, it held no particular attraction. It could tell him no secrets he cares a stiver to hear.

Now, Mike for a first time feels moved to a bit of self-enlightenment. Poising himself for the effort, Mike, with the quickness of light, sends in a right-hand smash that all but topples the contrivance from its base. For the moment the muscles of his back and leg knot and leap in rope-like ridges; and then they as instantly sink away. The machine registers eight hundred and ninety-one pounds.

The on-gazers draw a long breath. Then they turn their eyes on Mike, whose regular outlines, with muscles retreated again into curves and slopes and shimmering ripples, have no taint of the bruiser, and whose handsome features, inno-

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

cent of a faintest ferocity, recall some beautiful statue rather than anything more viciously hard.

Mike's second earnest blow comes off in this sort. He is homeward bound from gymnasium work one frosty midnight. Not a block from his home, three evil folk of the night are standing beneath an electric light. Mike, unsuspecting, passes them. Instantly, one delivers a cut at Mike's head with a sandbag. Mike, warned by the shadow of uplifted arm, springs forward out of reach, wheels, and then as the footpad blunders towards him, Mike's left hand, clenched and hammerlike, goes straight to his face. Bone and teeth are broken with the shock of it; blood spurts, and the footpad comes senseless to the pave. His ally, one of the other two, grasps at Mike's throat. His clutch slips on the stern muscles of the athlete's neck as if the neck were a column of brass. Mike seizes his assailant's arm with his right hand; there is a twist and a shriek; the second robber rolls about with a dislocated fore-arm. The third, unharmed, flies screeching with the fear of death upon him.

At full speed comes a policeman, warned of his duty by the howls of anguish. He surveys the two on the ground; one still and quiet, the other groaning and cursing with his twisted arm. The officer sends in an ambulance call. Then he surveys with pleased intentness the regular face of Mike, cool and unperturbed.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“An Irish Sheeny!” softly comments the officer to himself.

He is expert of faces, is the officer, and deduces Mike’s two-ply origin from his yellow hair, dark eye and curved nose.

“You’re part Irish and part Jew,” observes the policeman.

“My mother was from Ireland,” answers Mike; “my father was a Spanish Jew from Salamanca. I think that’s what they call it, although I was not old enough when he died to remember much about him.”

“Irish crossed on Jew!” comments the officer, still in a mood of thoughtful admiration. “It’s the best prize-ring strain in the world!” The officer is in his dim way a patron of sport.

Mike thanks the other; for, while by no means clearly understanding, he feels that a compliment is meant. Then Mike goes homeward to Mollie and little Davy.

It is the twenty-third of December—two days before Christmas—when we are first made friends of Mike Menares. About a month before, the little family of three fell upon bad days. Mike was dismissed by the great grocers, and the six dollars weekly from that quarter came to an end. Mike’s delivery wagon was run down and crushed by a car; and, while Mike was not to blame, the grocers have no time to discover a justice, and Mike was told to go.

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

For mere food and light and fire, Mike's other six Saturday dollars from Professor O'Punch would with economy provide. But there is the rent on New Year's day! Also, and more near, is Christmas, with not a penny to spare. It must perforce be a bare festival, this Christmas. It will be a blow to little Davy of the crutch, who has talked only of Christmas for two months past and gone.

Mike, as has been intimated, is dull and slow of brain. He has just enough of education to be able to read and write. He owns no bad habits—no habits at all, in fact; and the one great passion of his simple heart is love without a limit for Mollie and little Davy. He lives for them; the least of their desires is the great concern of Mike's life. Therefore, when his income shrinks from twelve dollars to six, it creeps up on him and chills him as a loss to Mollie and Davy. And peculiarly does this sorrowful business of a ruined Christmas for Davy prey on poor Mike.

"You and I won't mind," says housewife Mollie, looking up in Mike's face with the sage dignity of her eleven years, "because we're old enough to understand; but I feel bad about little Davy. It's the first real awful Christmas we've ever had."

Mollie is as bright and wise as Mike is dull. Seven years her senior, still Mike has grown to believe in and rely altogether on Mollie as a guide. He takes her commands without question,

THE BLACK LION INN.

and does her will like a slave. To Mollie goes every one of Mike's dollars; it is Mollie who disposes of them, while Mike never gives them a thought. They have been devoted to the one purpose of Mike's labors; they have gone to Mollie and little Davy of the crutch; why, then, should Mike pursue them further?

Following housewife Mollie's regrets over a sad Christmas that was not because of their poverty to be a Christmas, Mike sits solemnly by the window looking out on the gathering gloom and hurrying holiday crowds of Pitt Street. The folk are all poor; yet each seems able to do a bit for Christmas. As they hurry by, with small bundles and parcels, and now and then a basket from which protrude mayhap a turkey's legs or other symptom of the victory of Christmas, Mike, in the midst of his sluggish amiabilities, discovers a sense of pain—a darkish thought of trouble.

And as if grief were to sharpen his wits, Mike has for almost a first and last time an original idea. It is the thought natural enough, when one reflects on Mike's engagements, evening in and evening out, with Professor O'Punch.

That day Mike, in passing through the Bowery, read the two hundred dollars offer of the self-confident Terror. At that time Mike felt nothing save wonder that so great a fortune might be the reward of so small an effort. But it did not occur to him that he should try a tilt with the



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Terror. In his present stress, however, and with the woe upon him of a bad Christmas to dawn for little Davy, the notion marches slowly into Mike's intelligence. And it seems simple enough, too, now Mike has thought of it; and with nothing further of pro or con, he prepares himself for the enterprise.

For causes not clear to himself he says nothing to housewife Mollie of his plans. But he alarms that little lady of the establishment's few sparse pots and kettles by declining to eat his supper. Mollie fears Mike is ill. The latter, knowing by experience just as any animal might, that with twelve minutes of violent exercise before him, he is better without, while denying the imputation of illness, sticks to his supperless resolve.

Then Mike goes into the rear room and dons blue tights, blue sleeveless shirt, canvas trunks, and light shoes; his working costume. Over these he draws trousers and a blue sweater; on top of all a heavy double-breasted jacket. Thrusting his feet, light shoes and all, into heavy snow-proof overshoes, and pulling on a bicycle cap, Mike is arrayed for the street. Mollie knows of these several preparations, the ring costume under the street clothes, but thinks naught of it, such being Mike's nightly custom as he departs for the academy of Professor O'Punch. At the last moment, Mike kisses both Mollie and little Davy; and then, with a sudden original enthusiasm, he says:

THE BLACK LION INN.

“I’ve been thinkin’, Mollie; mebby I can get some money. Mebby we’ll see a good Christmas, after all.”

Mollie is dazed by the notion of Mike thinking; but she looks in his face, with its honest eyes full of love for her and Davy, and as beautiful as a god’s and as unsophisticated, and in spite of herself a hope begins to live and lift up its head. Possibly Mike may get money; and Christmas, and the rent, and many another matter then pinching the baby housekeeper and of which she has made no mention to Mike, will be met and considered.

“It’ll be nice if you should get money, Mike,” is all Mollie trusts herself to say, as she returns Mike’s good-bye kiss.

When Mike gets into Pitt Street he moves slowly. There’s the crowd, for one thing. Then, too, it’s over early for his contest with the Terror. Mike prefers to arrive at the theatre just in time to strip and make the required application for those two hundred dollars. It may appear strange, but it never once occurs to Mike that he will not last the demanded four rounds. But it seems such a weighty sum! Mike doubts if the offer be earnest; hesitates with the fear that the management will refuse to give him the money at the end.

“But surely,” decides Mike, “they will feel as though they ought to give me something. I lose

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

a dollar by not going to Professor O'Punch's; they must take account of that."

Mike loiters along with much inborn ease of heart. Occasionally he pauses to gaze into one of the cheap shop windows, ablaze and garish of the season's wares. There is no wind; the air has no point; but it is snowing softly, persistently, flakes of a mighty size and softness.

Ten minutes before he arrives at that theatre which has been the scene of the Terror's triumphs, Mike enters a bakery whereof the proprietor, a German, is known to him. Mike has no money but he feels no confusion for that.

"John," says Mike to the German; "I've got to spar a little to-night and I want a big plate of soup."

"Sure!" says John, leading the way to a rear room which thrives greasily as a kind of restaurant. "And here, Mike," goes on John, as the soup arrives, "I'll put a big drink of sherry in it. You will feel good because of it, and the sherry and the hot soup will make you quick and strong already."

At the finish, Mike, with an eye of bland innocence—for he is certain the theatre will give him something, even if it withhold the full two hundred—tells John he will pay for the soup within the hour, when he returns.

"That's all right, Mike," cries the good-natured baker, "any time will do."

THE BLACK LION INN.

"This w'y, me cove," observes a person with a cockney accent, as the sharp gamin delivers Mike, together with the message to the Terror, at the stage door; "this w'y; 'ere's a dressin' room for you to shift your togs."

Later, when Mike's outer husks are off and he stands arrayed for the ring, this person, who is old and gray and wears a scarred and battered visage, looks Mike over in approval:

"You seems an amazin' bit of stuff, lad," says this worthy man; "the build of Tom Sayres at his best, but 'eavier. I 'opes you'll do this Mick, but I'm afeared on it. You looks too pretty; an' you ain't got a fightin' face. How 'eavy be you, lad?"

"One hundred and eighty-one," replies Mike, smiling on the Englishman with his boy's eyes.

"Can you spar a bit?" asks the other.

"Why, of course I can!" and Mike's tones exhibit surprise.

"Well, laddy," says the other; "don't let this Dublin bloke rattle you. 'E's a great blow'ard, I takes it, an' will quit if he runs ag'in two or three stiff 'uns. A score of years ago, I'd a-give 'im a stone an' done for 'im myself. I'm to be in your corner, laddy, an' I trusts you'll not disgrace me."

"Who are you?" asks Mike.

"Oh, me?" says the other; "I works for the theayter, laddy, an', bein' as 'ow I'm used to

fightin', I goes on to 'eel an' 'andle the amatoors as goes arter the Terror. It's all square, laddy; I'll be be'ind you; an' I'll 'elp you to win those pen-nies if I sees a w'y."

"I have also the honor," shouts the loud master of ceremonies, "to introduce to you Mike Menares, who will contend with the Dublin Terror. Should he stay four rounds, Marquis of Queensberry rules, the management forfeits two hundred dollars to the said Menares."

"What a model for my Jason," says a thin shaving of a man who stands as a spectator in the wings. He is an artist of note, and speaks to a friend at his elbow. "What a model for my Jason! I will give him five dollars an hour for three hours a day. What's his name? Mike what?" The battle is about to commence; the friend, tongue-tied of interest, makes no reply.

The Dublin Terror is a rugged, powerful ruffian, with lumpy shoulders, thick short neck, and a shock gorilla head. His little gray eyes are lighted fiercely. His expression is as savagely bitter as Mike's is gentle. The creature, a fighter by nature, was born meaning harm to other men.

There is a roped square, about eighteen feet each way, on the stage, in which the gladiators will box. The floor is canvas made safe with rosin. The master of ceremonies, himself a pugilist of celebration, will act as referee. The old battered man of White Chapel is in Mike's corner.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Another gentleman, with face similarly marred, but with Seven Dials as his nesting place, is posted opposite to befriend the Terror. There is much buzz in the audience—a rude gathering, it is—and a deal of sympathetic admiration and not a ray of hope for Mike in the eyes of those present.

The Terror is replete of a riotous confidence and savage to begin. For two nights, such is the awe of him engendered among local bruisers, no one has presented himself for a meeting. This has made the Terror hungry for a battle; he feels like a bear unfed. As he stands over from Mike awaiting the call of "Time," he looks formidable and forbidding, with his knotted arms and mighty hands.

Mike lounges in his place, the perfection of the athlete and picture of grace with power. His face, full of vacant amiability, shows pleased and interested as he looks out on the crowded, rampant house. Mike has rather the air of a spectator than a principal. The crowd does not shake him; he is not disturbed by the situation. In a fashion, he has been through the same thing every night, save Sunday, for three years. It comes commonplace enough to Mike.

In a blurred way Mike resents the blood-eagerness which glows in the eyes of his enemy; but he knows no fear. It serves to remind him, however, that no restraints are laid upon him in favor

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

of the brute across the ring, and that he is at liberty to hit with what lust he will.

“Time!” suddenly calls the referee.

Those who entertained a forbode of trouble ahead for Mike are agreeably surprised. With the word “Time!” Mike springs into tremendous life like a panther aroused. His dark eyes glow and gleam in a manner to daunt.

The Terror, a gallant headlong ruffian, throws himself upon Mike like a tornado. For full two minutes his blows fall like a storm. It does not seem of things possible that man could last through such a tempest. But Mike lasts; more than that, every blow of the Terror is stopped or avoided.

It runs off like a miracle to the onlookers, most of whom know somewhat of self-defensive arts. That Mike makes no reprisals, essays no counter-hits, does not surprise. A cautious wisdom would teach him to feel out and learn his man. Moreover, Mike is not there to attack; his mere mission is to stay four rounds.

While spectators, with approving comment on Mike’s skill and quickness, are reminding one another that Mike’s business is “simply to stay,” Mike himself is coming to a different thought. He has grown disgusted rather than enraged by the attacks of the Terror. His thrice-trained eye notes each detail of what moves as a whirlwind to folk looking on; his arm and foot provide auto-

THE BLACK LION INN.

matically for his defense and without direct effort of the brain. This leaves Mike's mind, dull as it is, with nothing to engage itself about save a contemplation of the Terror. In sluggish sort Mike begins to hold a vast dislike for that furious person.

As this dislike commences to fire incipiently, he recalls the picture of Mollie and little Davy of the crutch. Mike remembers that it is after ten o'clock, and his two treasures must be deep in sleep. Then he considers of Christmas, now but a day away; and of the money so necessary to the full pleasure of his sleeping Mollie and little Davy.

As those home-visions come to Mike, and his antipathy to the Terror mounting to its height, the grim impulse claims him to attack. Tiger-like he steps back to get his distance; then he springs forward. It is too quickly done for eye to follow. The Terror's guard is opened by a feint; and next like a flash Mike's left shoots cleanly in. There is a sharp "spank!" as the six-ounce glove finds the Terror's jaw; that person goes down like an oak that is felled. As he falls, Mike's right starts with a crash for the heart. But there is no need: Mike stops the full blow midway—a feat without a mate in boxing. The Terror lies as one without life.

"W'y didn't you let 'im 'ave your right like you started, laddy?" screams the old Cockney, as Mike walks towards his corner.

PITT STREET STRINGENCY.

Mike laughs in his way of gentle, soft good-nature, and points where the Terror, white and senseless, bleeds thinly at nose and ear.

"The left did it," Mike replies.

Out of his eyes the hot light is already dying. He takes a deep, deep breath, that arches his great breast and makes the muscles clutch and climb like serpents; he stretches himself by extending his arms and standing high on his toes. Meanwhile he beams pleasantly on his grizzled adherent.

"It wasn't much," says Mike.

"You be the coolest cove, laddy!" retorts the other in a rapt whisper. Then he towels deftly at the sweat on Mike's forehead.

The decision has been given in Mike's favor. And to his delight, without argument or hesitation, the loud young man of the vociferous garb comes behind the scenes and endows him with two hundred dollars.

"Say," observes the loud young man, admiringly, "you ain't no wonder, I don't t'ink!"

"But how did you come to do it, Mike?" asks the good-natured baker, as Mike lingers over a midnight porterhouse at the latter's restaurant.

"I had to, John," says Mike, turning his innocent face on the other; "I had to win Christmas money for Mollie and little Davy."

THE BLACK LION INN.

"And what," said the Sour Gentleman, "became of this Mike Menares?"

"I should suppose," broke in the Red Nosed Gentleman, who had followed the Jolly Doctor's narrative with relish, "I should suppose now he posed for the little sculptor's Jason."

"It is my belief he did," observed the Jolly Doctor, with a twinkle, "and in the end he became full partner of the bruiser, O'Punch, and shared the profits of the gymnasium instead of taking a dollar a night for his labors. His sister grew up and married, which, when one reflects on the experience of her mother, shows she owned no little of her brother's courage."

"Your story," remarked the Red Nosed Gentleman to the Jolly Doctor, "and the terrific blow which this Menares dealt the Dublin Terror brings to my mind a blow my father once struck."

This was a cue to the others and one quickly seized on; the Red Nosed Gentleman was urged to give the story of that paternal blow. First seeing to it that the stock of burgundy at his elbow was ample, and freighting his own and the Jolly Doctor's glasses to the brim, the Red Nosed Gentleman coughed, cleared his throat, and then gave us the tale of That Stolen Ace of Hearts.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

When I, at the unripe age of seventeen, left my father's poor cottage-house on Tom's Run and threw myself into life's struggle, I sought Pittsburg as a nearest promising arena of effort. I had a small place at a smaller wage as a sort of office boy and porter for a down-town establishment devoted to a commerce of iron; but as I came early to cut my connection with that hard emporium we will not dwell thereon.

I have already told you how by nature I was a gambler. I had inborn hankerings after games of chance, and it was scant time, indeed, before I found myself on terms of more or less near acquaintance with every card sharper of the city. And I became under their improper tutelage an expert cheat myself. At short cards and such devices as faro and roulette, I soon knew each devious turn and was in excellent qualification to pillage my way to eminence if not to riches among the nimble-fingered nobility of the green tables into whose midst I had coaxed or crowded my way. Vast was my ambition to soar as a black-

THE BLACK LION INN.

leg, and no student at his honest books burned with more fire to succeed. I became initiate into such mysteries as the "bug," the "punch," the "hold-out"; I could deal "double" or "from the bottom;" was a past master of those dubious faro inventions, the "snake," the "end squeeze," and the "balance top;" could "put back" with a clean deftness that might deceive even my masters in evil doing, and with an eye like a hawk read a deck of marked cards with the same easy certainty that I read the alphabet. It was a common compliment to my guilty merit that no better craftsman at crooked play ever walked in Diamond Alley.

No, as I've heretofore explained, there dawned a day when I gave up card gambling and played no more. It is now twenty years since I wagered so much as a two-bit piece in any game other than the Wall Street game of stocks. And yet it was no moral arousal that drew me from roulette, from farobank and from draw poker. I merely awoke to the truth that the greatest simpleton of cards is the professional gambler himself; and with that I turned my back on the whole scurvy business and quit the dens for the exchange. And with no purpose to preach, I say openly and with a fullest freedom that the game of stock speculation is as replete of traps and pitfalls, and of as false and blackleg character as any worst game of iniquitous faro that is dealt with trimmed

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

and sanded deck from a dishonest box. As an arena of morals the stock exchange presents no conscious improvement beyond what is offered by the veriest dead-fall ever made elate with those two rings at the bell which tell the waiting inmates that some "steerer" is on the threshold with rustic victim to be fleeced. I once read that the homestead of Captain Kidd, the pirate, stood two centuries ago on that plot of ground now covered by the New York Stock Exchange; and I confess to a smile when I reflected how the spirit of immortal rapine would seem to hover over the place. The exchange is a fit successor to the habitat of that wild freebooter who died and dried in execution dock when long ago the Stuart Anne was queen.

During those earlier months in Pittsburg, I was not permitted by my father—who had much control of me, even unto the day of his death—to altogether abandon Tom's Run, and the good, grimy miner folk, its inhabitants. My week's holiday began with each Saturday's noon; from that hour until Monday morning I was free; and thus, obeying my father's behests, Saturday evening and Sunday, I was bound to pass beneath my parents' roof.

It was during one of these visits home when I first cheated at cards—memorable event!—and it was on another that my roguery was discovered and my father struck that blow.

THE BLACK LION INN.

As already stated, my father was of Welsh extraction. It was no less the fact, however, that his original stock was Irish; his grandfather—I believe it to have been that venerable and I trust respected gentleman—coming to Wales from somewhere on the banks of the Blackwater. And my father, excellent man! had vast pride in his Irish lineage and grew never so angry, particularly if a bit heated of his Saturday evening cups, as when one spoke of him as offshoot of the rocky land of leeks and saintly David.

“What!” he would cry; “because I was born in Wales, do you take me for an onion-eating Welshman? Man, I’m Irish and don’t make that mistake again!”

The vigor wherewith his mine-hardened fist smote the table as conclusion to this, carried such weight of emphasis that no man was ever found to fall a second time into the error.

For myself, the question whether my ancestors were Welsh or Irish held little interest. I was looking forward not backward, and a hot avarice to hunt dollars drove from my bosom the last trace of concern touching a genealogy. I would sooner have one year’s run of uninterrupted luck at a gambling table than to know myself a direct descendant of the Plantagenets. Not so my dear old father; to the hour when death closed his eyes—already sightless for ten years—burned out with a blast, they were—he ceased not to regale

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

me with tales of that noble line of dauntless Irish from whom we drew our blood. For the ten years following the destruction of his eyes by powder, I saw much of my father, for I established him at a little country tavern near enough to the ocean to hear the surf and smell the salt breath of it, and two or three times a week I made shift to get down where he was. And whether my stay was for an hour or for a night—as on Sunday this latter came often to be the chance—he made his pedigree, or what he dreamed was such, the proud burden of his conversation.

Brian Boru, I remember, was an original well-head of our family. My father was tireless in his settings forth of this hero king of Munster; nor did he fail at the close of his story to curse the assassin who struck down Boru at Clontarf. Sometimes to tease him, I'd argue what must have been the weak and primitive inconsequence of the royal Boru. I'd suggest that by the sheer narrowness and savagery of the hour wherein that monarch lived, he could have been nothing more royal than the mere king of a kale patch, and probably wore less of authority with still less of revenue and reverence than belong commonly with any district leader of Tammany Hall.

At these base doubtings my parent's wrath would mount. He would wax vivid with a picture of the majesty and grandeur of the great Boru; and of the halls wherein he fed and housed

THE BLACK LION INN.

a thousand knights compared with whom in riches, magnificence, and chivalrous feats those warriors who came about King Arthur's round table showed paltry, mean and low. To crown narration he would ascribe to Boru credit as a world's first law giver and hail him author of the "Code Brian."

"Shure!" he would say; "he called his scholars and his penmen about him and he made them write down as the wor-rds fell from th' mouth av him th' whole of th' Code Brian; an' this in tur-rn was a model of th' Code Napoleon that makes th' law av Fr-rance to-day."

It was in vain I pointed out that Napoleon's Code found its roots and as well, its models, in the Corpus Juris Civilis of Justinian—I had learned so much Latin from Father Glennon—and that nowhere in the English law was the Code Brian, as he called it, so much as adverted to.

"An' that's th' Sassenach jealousy av thim!" he would say. "An' who was this Justinian? Who, indade, but a thievin' Roman imp'ror who shtole his laws from King Boru just as th' Dagoes now are shtealin' th' jobs at th' mines from th' Irish an' Welsh lads to whom they belong av r-rights."

After this I said no more; I did not explain that Justinian and his Pandects and the others of his grand body of civil law were in existence five centuries before the martyred Boru was born. That

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

discovery would have served no purpose beyond my parent's exasperation and earned for myself as well as the world's historians naught save a cataract of hard words.

You marvel, perhaps, why I dwell with such length on the memory of my father—a poor, blind, ignorant miner of coal! I loved the old man; and to this day when my hair, too, is gray and when I may win my wealth and count my wealth and keep my wealth with any of the land, I recall him as the only man for whom I ever felt either love or confidence or real respect.

Yes; I heard much of the blood of the truculent yet wise Boru; also of younger ancestors who fought for the Stuarts against Cromwell, against Monmouth, against William; and later in both the "Fifteen" and in the "Forty-five." Particularly was I made to know of my mother's close connection by blood with the house of that brave Sarsfield "who," as my father explained, "fairly withstod th' Dootchman at th' Boyne; an' later made him quit before th' walls av Limerick."

There was one tradition of the renowned Sarsfield which the old gentleman was peculiarly prone to relate, and on the head of him who distrusted the legend there was sure to fall a storm. That particular tale concerned the Irish soldier and the sword of Wallace wight.

"Thish William Wallace," my father was wont to say as he approached the myth, "was a joint

THE BLACK LION INN.

(giant), no less. He was nine fut 'leven inches tall an' his soord was eight fut foore inches long. It's in Stirlin' Cashtle now, an' there niver was but one man besides Wallace who cud handle it. Th' Black Douglas an' all av thim Scotchmen thried it an' failed. Whin, one day, along comes Gin'ral Patrick Sarsfield—a little bit av a felly, only five fut siven inches tall—an' he tuk that soord av William Wallace in one hand an', me son, he made it whishtle."

But I must press to my first crime of cards or your patience will desert. During those summer months on Tom's Run when the mines were open and my father and his mates of the pick and blast were earning their narrow pay, it was the habit of himself and four or five other gentlemen of coal to gather in the Tom's Run Arms when Saturday evening came on, and relax into that amusement dear to Ireland as "forty-five." Usually they played for a dime a corner; on occasional rich evenings the stakes mounted dizzily to two-bits, though this last was not often.

Now I was preyed on by a desire to make one at this Saturday contention, but my father would never consent.

"Jack," he'd say; "you'd only lose your money. Shure! you're nawthin' but a boy an' not fit to pla-ay cards with th' loikes av grown-up men."

But I persisted; I argued—to myself, you may

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

be certain—while I might be no match for these old professors of forty-five who played the game with never a mistake, if I, like them, played honestly, that the cunning work I meditated could not fail to bring me in the wealth.

At last one of the others came to my rescue.

“Let him pla-ay, Mishter Roche,” he said. “Let’s win his money fr-rom him an’ it’ll be a lesson. He’ll not lose much before he’ll be gla-ad to quit.”

“All right, thin,” replied my father; “you can pla-ay, Jack, till you lose fifty cints; an’ that’ll do ye. Moind now! whin you lose fifty cints you shtop.” And so I was made one of the circle.

As I foresaw, I did not lose the four-bits which my indulgent parent had marked as the limits of farthest sacrifice to my ambitious innocence. Already I had brought back to Tom’s Run a curious trick or two from Pittsburg. It soon came to be my “deal,” and the moment I got the cards in my hands I abstracted the ace of hearts—a most doughty creature in this game of forty-five!—and dropped it in my lap, covering the fact from vulgar eyes with a fold of my handkerchief. That was all the chicane I practiced; I kept myself in constant possession of the ace of hearts and played it at a crisis; and at once the wagered dimes of the others began to travel into my illicit pockets where they made a merry jingle, I warrant you!

THE BLACK LION INN.

The honest Irish from whom I was filching these small tributes never once bethought that I might play them sharp; they attributed my gains to luck and loud was exclamation over my good fortune. Time and again, for I was not their equal as a mere player, I'd board the wrong card. When I'd make such a mistake, one of them would cry: "D'ye moind that now! D'ye moind how ba-ad he plays!"

"An' yet," another would add, "an' yet he rakes th' money!"

Altogether I regarded my entrance into this ten-cent game of forty-five a most felicitous affair. I won at every sitting; getting up on some occasions with as much as eight dollars of profit for my evening's work. In those days I went willingly to Tom's Run, quitting Pittsburg without a sigh; and such was my ardor to fleece these coal-digging comrades of my father—and for that matter, my father, also; for like your true gambler, I played no favorites and was as warm to gather in the dimes of my parent as any—that I was usually found waiting about the forty-five table when, following supper, they appeared. And it all went favorably with me for perhaps a dozen sittings; my aggregate gains must have reached the mighty sum of sixty dollars. Of a merry verity! silver was at high tide in my hands!

One evening as the half dozen devoted to the science of forty-five drew up to the table—

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

myself a stripling boy, the others bearded miner men—my father complained of an ache in his head or an ache in his stomach or some malady equally cogent, and said he would not play.

“I’ll have me poipe an’ me mug av beer,” he said, “an’ resht mesilf a bit. It’s loike I’ll feel betther afther a whoile an’ then I’ll take a ha-and.”

Play began, while my suffering father with his aches, his tobacco and his beer, sat nursing himself at a near-by table. I lost no time in acquiring my magic ace of hearts and at once the stream of usual fortune set in to flow my way.

Ten years, yes, one year later, my suspicions touching my father’s illness and his reasons for this unprecedented respite from the cares of forty-five would have stood more on tiptoe. As it was, however, it never assailed me as a thought that I had become the subject of ancestral doubts. I cheated on and on, and made hay while the sun shone with never a cloud in the sky.

It was not noticed by me, but following a half-hour’s play and while I was shuffling the cards for a deal, my parent stole noiselessly behind my chair. He reached under my arm and lifted the corner of the concealing handkerchief which filled my lap. Horrors! there lay the tell-tale ace of hearts!

Even then I realized nothing and knew not that

THE BLACK LION INN.

my villainy was made bare. This news, however, was not long in its arrival.

“Niver did I r-raise a boy to be a r-robber!” roared my father.

Coincident with this remark, the paternal hand—not the lightest nor least formidable on Tom’s Run—dealt me a buffet on the head that lifted me from my sinful chair and hurled me across the room and against the wall full fifteen feet away. My teeth clattered, my wits reeled, while my ill-gotten silver danced blithely to metallic music of its own.

“Niver did I r-raise a boy to be a r-robber!” again shouted my father. Then seizing me by the collar, he lifted me to my feet. “Put all your money on the ta-able!” he cried; “put ivry groat av it!”

There was no escape; I was powerless in the talons of an inexorable fate. My pockets yielded a harvest of hardby seventy-five dollars—something more than the total of my winnings—and this was placed in the center of the table which had so lately witnessed my skill. An even distribution was then made by my father among the victims, each getting his share of the recovered treasure; my father keeping none for himself though urged by the others to that end.

“No,” said my father; “I’ll touch niver a penny av it. You take th’ money; I’ll make shift that

THAT STOLEN ACE OF HEARTS.

the dishgrace of bein' fa-ather to a rapparee shall do for me share!"

With that, he withdrew from the scene of my downfall, carrying me fast in his clutch; and later—bathed in tears of pain and shame—I was dragged into the presence of my mother and Father Glennon by the ignominious ear.

It did not cure me of cards, however; I ran the whole gamut of gambling and won dangerous prominence as a sharper of elevation and rank. To-morrow evening, should you care to listen, I may unfold concerning other of my adventures; I may even relate—as a tale most to my diplomatic glory, perhaps—how I brought Casino Joe to endow me with that great secret, richer, in truth! than the mines of Peru! of "How to Tell the Last Four."

"Speakin' of gamblin'," observed the Old Cattleman when the Red Nosed Gentleman had come to a full stop, "I'll bet a bloo stack that as we-alls sets yere talkin', the games is goin' brisk an' hot in Wolfville. Thar won't be no three foot of snow to put a damper on trade an' hobble a gent's energies in Arizona." This last with a flush of pride.

"Does everybody gamble in the West?" asked the Sour Gentleman.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Every sport who’s got the dinero does,” responded the Old Cattleman. “White folks, Injuns an’ Mexicans is right now at roulette an’ faro bank an’ monte as though they ain’t got a minute to live. I hates to concede ’em so much darin’, but the Mexicans, speshul, is zealous for specyoolations. Which they’d shore wager their immortal souls on the turn of a kyard, only a Greaser’s soul don’t own no market valyoo.”

“If you will,” said the Jolly Doctor, “you might tell us something of Mexicans and their ways, their labors and relaxations—their loves and their hates. I’d be pleased to hear of those interesting people from one who knows them so thoroughly.”

“Which I shore knows ’em,” returned the Old Cattleman, “an’ as I concedes how each gent present oughter b’ar his share of the entertainment, I’ll tell you of Chiquita of Chaparita.”

CHAPTER IX.

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

Which I doubts some if I'm a proper party to be a historian of Mexicans. Nacherally I abhors 'em; an' when a gent abhors anything, that is a Caucasian gent, you-all can gamble the limit he won't do it jestice. His prejudices is bound to hit the surface like one of these yere rock ledges in the mountains. Be white folks ag'in Mexicans? Gents, the paleface is ag'in everybody but himse'f; ag'in Mexicans, niggers, Injuns, Chinks—he's ag'in 'em all; the paleface is overbearin' an' insolent, an' because he's the gamest fighter he allows he's app'inted of Providence to prance 'round, tyrannizin' an' makin' trouble for everybody whose color don't match his own. Shore, I'm as bad as others; only I ain't so bigoted I don't savey the fact.

Doc Peets is the one white gent I encounters who's willin' to mete out to Mexicans a squar' deal from a squar' deck. I allers reckons these yere equities on Peets' part arises a heap from his bein' a scientist. You take a scientist like Peets an' the science in him sort o' submerges an'

THE BLACK LION INN.

drowns out what you-all might term the racial notions native to the hooman soil. They comes to conclussions dispassionate, that a-way, scientists does; an' Mexicans an' Injuns reaps a milder racket at their hands. With sech folks as Old Man Enright an' me, who's more indoored an' acts on that arrogance which belongs with white folks at birth, inferior races don't stand no dazzlin' show.

Mexicans, as a herd, is stunted an' ondeveloped both mental an' physical. They bears the same compar'son to white folks that these yere little broncos does to the big hosses of the States. In intellects, Mexicans is about 'leven hands high. To go into one of their jimcrow plazas is like retreatin' back'ard three hundred years. Their idees of agriculture is plenty primitive. An' their minds is that bogged down in ignorance you-all can't teach 'em nothin'. They clings to their worm-eaten customs like a miser to his money. Their plow is a wedge of wood; they hooks on about three yoke of bulls—measley, locoed critters—an' with four or five Greasers to screech an' herd an' chunk up the anamiles they goes stampedin' back'ard an' for'ard on their sandy river-bottom fields—the same bein' about as big as a saddle blanket—an' they calls that plowin'. They sows the grain as they plows, sort o' scratches it in; an' when it comes up they don't cut it none same as we-all harvests a crop. No; they ain't capable

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

of sech wisdom. They pulls it up by the roots an' ties it in bundles. Then they sweeps off a clean spot of earth like the floor of one of these yere brickyards an' covers it with the grain same as if it's a big mat. Thar's a corral constructed 'round it of posts an' lariats; an' next, on top of the mat of grain, they drives in the loose burros, cattle, goats, an' all things else that's got a hoof; an' tharupon they jams this menagerie about until the grain is trodden out. That's what a Greaser regards as threshin' grain, so you can estimate how ediotic he is. When it's trompled sufficient, he packs off the stalks an' straw to make mats an' thatches for the 'dobies; while he scrapes up the dust an' wheat into a blanket an' climbs onto the roof of his *casa* an' pours it down slow onto the ground, an' all so it gives the wind a openin' to get action an' blow away the chaff an' dust.

But what's the use of dilatin' on savageries like that? I could push for'ard an' relate how they makes flour with a stone rollin'-pin in a stone trough; how they grinds coffee by wroppin' it in a gunny sack an' beatin' it with a rock; but where's the good? It would only go lowerin' your estimates of hooman nature to no end.

Whatever be their amoosements? Everything on earth amooses 'em. They has so many holidays, Mexicans does, they ain't hardly left no time for work. They're pirootin' about constant, grinnin' an' chatterin' like a outfit of bloo-jays.

THE BLACK LION INN.

No; they ain't singers none. Takin' feet an' fingers, that a-way, a Mexican is moosical. They emerges a heap strong at dancin', an' when it comes to a fandango, hens on hot griddles is examples of listless abstraction to 'em. With sech weepsons, too, as guitars an' fiddles an' a gourd half-full of gravel to shake an' beat out the time, they can make the scenery ring. Thar they stops, however; a Greaser's moosic never mounts higher than the hands. At singin', crows an' guinea chickens lays over 'em like a spade flush over nines-up.

Most likely if I reelates to you-all the story of a day among the Mexicans you comes to a cl'arer glimpse of their loves an' hates an' wars an' merry-makin's. Mexicans, like Injuns when a paleface is about, lapses into shyness an' timidity same as one of these yere cottontail rabbits. But among themse'fs, when they feels onbuckled an' at home, their play runs off plenty different. Tharfore a gent's got to study Mexicans onder friendly auspices, an' from the angle of their own home-life, if he's out to rope onto conclussions concernin' them that'll stand the tests of trooth.

It's one time when I'm camped in the Plaza Chaparita. It's doorin' the eepock when I freights from Vegas to the Canadian over the old Fort Bascom trail. One of the mules—the nigh swing mule, he is—quits on me, an' I has to lay by until that mule recovers his sperits.

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

It's a *fieste* or holiday at the Plaza Chaparita. The first local sport I connects with is the padre. He's little, brown, an' friendly; an' has twinklin' beady eyes like a rattlesnake; the big difference bein' that the padre's eyes is full of fun, whereas the optics of rattlesnakes is deevold of humor utter. Shore; rattlesnakes wouldn't know a joke from the ace of clubs.

The padre's on his way to the 'dobe church; an' what do you-all figger now that divine's got onder his arm? Hymn books, says you? That's where you're barkin' at a knot. The padre's packin' a game chicken—which the steel gaffs, drop-socket they be an' of latest sort, is in his pocket—an' as I goes squanderin' along in his company, he informs me that followin' the services thar'll be a fight between his chicken an' a rival brass-back belongin' to a commoonicant named Romero. The padre desires my presence, an' in a sperit of p'liteness I allows I'll come idlein' over onless otherwise engaged, the same bein' unlikely.

Gents, you should have witnessed that battle! It's shore lively carnage; yes, the padre's bird wins an' downs Romero's entry the second buckle.

On the tail of the padre's triumph, one of his parishioners gets locoed, shakes a chicken outen a bag an' proclaims that he'll fight him ag'in the world for two dollars a side. At that another enthoosiasit gives notice that if the first parishioner will pinch down his bluff to one dollar—he says

THE BLACK LION INN.

he don't believe in losin' an' winnin' fortunes on a chicken—he'll prodooce a bird an' go him once.

The match is made, an' while the chickens is facin' each other a heap feverish an' fretful, peckin' an' see-sawin' for a openin', the various Greasers who's bet money on 'em lugs out their beads an' begins to pray to beat four of a kind. Shore, they're prayin' that their partic'lar chicken'll win. Still, when I considers that about as many Greasers is throwin' themse'fs at the throne of grace for one as for the other, if Providence is payin' any attention to 'em—an' I deems it doubtful—I estimates that them orisons is a stand-off.

As the birds goes to the center, one party sprinkles something on his chicken. At that the opposition grabs up his bird an' appeals to the padre. He challenges the other's bird because he says he's been sprinkled with holy-water.

The padre inquires, an' the holy-water sharp confesses his guilt. Also, he admits that he hides the gaffs onder the altar cloth doorin' the recent services so they'll acquire extra grace an' power.

The padre turns severe at this an' declar's the fight off; an' he forfeits the doctored chicken an' the gaffs to himse'f a whole lot—he representin' the church—to teach the holy-water sharp that yereafter he's not to go seizin' onfair advantages, an' to lead a happier an' a better life. That culprit don't say a word but passes over his chicken an' the steel regalia for its heels. You can bet that padre's word is law in the Plaza Chaparita!

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

Followin' this fiasco of the holy-water chicken the Mexicans disperses themse'fs to pulque an' monte an' the dance. The padre an' me sa'nters about; me bein' a Americano, an' him what you might call professionally sedate, we-all don't go buttin' into the *baile* nor the pulque nor the gamblin'. The padre su'gests that we go a-weavin' over to his own camp, which he refers to as Casa Dolores—though thar's nothin' dolorous about it, the same bein' the home of mirth an' hilarity, that a-way—an' he allows he's got some Valley Tan hived up that'll make me forget my nationality if stoodiously adhered to. It's needless to observe that I accompanies the beady-eyed padre without a struggle. An' I admits, free an' without limitation, that said Valley Tan merits the padre's encomiums an' fixes me in my fav'rite theery that no matter what happens, the best happens to the church.

As we crosses the little Plaza on our way to Casa Dolores we passes in front of the church. Thar on the grass lays the wooden image of the patron saint of the Plaza Chaparita. This figger is about four foot long, an' thar's a hossha'r lariat looped onto it where them Mexicans who gets malcontent with the saint ropes him off his perch from up in front of the church. They've been haulin' the image about an' beatin' it with cactus sticks an' all expressive of disdain.

THE BLACK LION INN.

I asks the padre why his congregation engages itse'f in studied contoomely towards the Plaza's saint. He shrugs his shoulders, spreads his hands palm out, an' says it's because the Plaza's sheep gets sick. I su'gests that him an' me cut in an' rescoo the saint; more partic'lar since the image is all alone, an' the outfit that's been beatin' him up has abandoned said corrections to drink pulque an' exercise their moccasins in the *baile*. But the padre shakes his head. He allows it's a heap better to let the public fully vent its feelin's. He explains that when the sheep gets well the congregation'll round-up the image, give him a reproachful talk an' a fresh coat of paint, an' put him back on his perch. The saint'll come winner on the deal all right, the padre says.

"Besides," argues the padre, "it is onnecessary for pore blinded mortals to come pawin' about to protect a saint. These yere images," he insists, "can look after themse'fs. They'll find the way outen their troubles whenever they gets ready."

At that we proceeds for'ard to Casa Dolores an' the promised Valley Tan, an' leaves the wooden saint to his meditations on the grass. After all, I agrees with the padre. It's the saint's business to ride herd on the interests of the Plaza Chaparita; an' if he goes to sleep on the lookout's stool an' takes to neglectin' sech plays as them sheep gettin' sick, whatever is the Greasers goin'

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

to do? They're shore bound to express their disapproval; an' I reckons as good a scheme as any is to caper up, yank the careless image outen his niche with a lariat, an' lam loose an' cavil at him with a club.

This yere *fieste* at the Plaza Chaparita is a day an' night of laughter, dance an' mirth. But it ends bad. The padre an' me is over to the dance-hall followin' our investigations touchin' the Valley Tan an' the padre explains to me how he permits to his people a different behavior from what's possible among Americanos.

"I studies for the church in Baltimore," the padre says, "an' thar the priest must keep a curb on his Americano parishioners. They are not like Mexicanos. They're fierce an' headlong an' go too far. If you let them gamble, they gamble too much; if you let them drink, they drink too much. The evil of the Americano is that he overplays. It is not so with the Mexicano. If the Mexicano gambles, it is only a trifle an' for pleasure; if he drinks, it is but enough to free a bird's song in his heart. All my people drink an' dance an' gamble; but it's only play, it is never earnest. See! in the whole Plaza Chaparita you find no drunkard, no pauper; no one is too bad or too good or too rich or too poor or too unhappy."

Then the priest beams on me like he disposes of the question; an' since I've jest been drinkin'

THE BLACK LION INN.

his Valley Tan I don't enter no protests to what he states. From what ensoos, however, I should jedge the padre overlooks his game in one partic'lar.

As me an' the padre sits gazin' on at the dance, a senorita with a dark shawl over her head, drifts into the door like a shadow. She's little; an' by what I sees of her face, she's pretty. As she crosses in front of the padre she stops an' sort o' drops down on one knee with her head bowed. The padre blesses her an' calls her "Chiquita;" then she goes on. I don't pay no onusual attention; though as me an' the padre talks, I notes her where she stands with her shawl still over her head in a corner of the dance hall.

Across from the little Chiquita is a young Greaser an' his sweetheart. This girl is pretty, too; but her shawl ain't over her head an' she an' her *muchacho*, from their smiles an' love glances, is havin' the happiest of nights.

"It looks like you'll have a weddin' on your hands," I says to the padre, indicatin' where the two is courtin'.

"Chiquita should not stay here," says the padre talkin' to himse'f. With that he organizes like he's goin' over to the little shawled senorita in the corner.

It strikes me that the padre's remark is a heap irrelevant. But I soon sees that he onderstands the topics he tackles a mighty sight better than

CHIQUITA OF CHAPARITA.

me. The padre's hardly moved when it looks like the senorita Chiquita saveys he's out to head her off. With that she crosses the dance-hall swift as a cat an' flashes a knife into the heart of the laughing girl. The next moment the knife is planted in her own.

It's the old story, so old an' common thar's not a new word to be said. Two dead girls; love the reason an' the jealous knife the trail. Thar's not a scream, not a word; that entire *baile* stands transfixed. As the padre raises the little Chiquita's head, I sees the tears swimmin' in his eyes. It's the one time I comes nearest thinkin' well of a Mexican; that padre, at least, is toler'ble.

"That is a very sad finale—the death of the girls," observed the Sour Gentleman, reaching for the Scotch whiskey as though for comfort's sake. "And still, the glimpse you gave would move me to a pleasant estimate of Mexicans."

"Why then," returned the Old Cattleman, becoming also an applicant for Scotch, "considered as abstract prop'sitions, Mexicans aint so bad. Which they're like Injuns; they improves a lot by distance. An' they has their strong p'int, too; gratioode is one. You-all confer a favor on a Mexican, an' he'll hang on your trail a hundred

THE BLACK LION INN.

years but what he'll do you a favor in return. An' he'll jest about pay ten for one at that.

“Speakin' of gratitooode, Sioux Sam yere tells a story to 'llustrate how good deeds is bound to meet their reward. It's what the squaws tells the papooses to make 'em kind.” Then to Sioux Sam: “Give us the tale of Strongarm an' the Big Medicine Elk. The talk is up to you.”

Sioux Sam was in no sort diffident, and readily told us the following:

CHAPTER X.

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK.

Moh-Kwa was the wisest of all the beasts along the Upper Yellowstone; an' yet Moh-Kwa could not catch a fish. This made Moh-Kwa have a bad heart, for next to honey he liked fish. What made it worse was that in Moh-Kwa's cavern where he lived, there lay a deep pool which was the camp of many fish; an' Moh-Kwa would sit an' look at them an' long for them, while the fish came close to the edge an' laughed at Moh-Kwa, for they knew beneath their scales that he could not catch them; an' the laughter of the fish made a noise like swift water running among rocks. Sometimes Moh-Kwa struck at a fish with his big paw, but the fish never failed to dive out of reach; an' this made the other fish laugh at Moh-Kwa more than before. Once Moh-Kwa got so angry he plunged into the pool to hunt the fish; but it only made him seem foolish, for the fish swam about him in flashing circles, an' dived under him an' jumped over him, laughing all the time, making a play an' a sport of Moh-Kwa. At last he gave up an' swam ashore; an' then he

THE BLACK LION INN.

had to sit by his fire an' comb his fur all day to dry himself so that he might feel like the same bear again.

One morning down by the Yellowstone, Moh-Kwa met Strongarm, the young Sioux, an' Strongarm had a buffalo fish which he had speared in the river. An' because Moh-Kwa looked at the fish hungrily an' with water in his mouth, Strongarm gave him the buffalo fish. Also he asked Moh-Kwa why he did not catch fish since he liked them so well an' the pool in his cavern was the camp of many fish. An' Moh-Kwa said it was because the fish were cowards an' would not stay an' fight with him, but ran away.

"They are not so brave as the bees," said Moh-Kwa, "for when I find a bee-tree, they make me fight for the honey. The bees have big hearts though little knives, but the fish have no hearts an' run like water down hill if they but see Moh-Kwa's shadow from his fire fall across the pool."

Strongarm said he would catch the fish for Moh-Kwa; an' with that he went to the Wise Bear's house an' with his spear took many fish, being plenty to feed Moh-Kwa two days. Moh-Kwa was very thankful, an' because Strongarm liked the Wise Bear, he came four times each moon an' speared fish for Moh-Kwa who was never so well fed with fish before.

Strongarm was a mighty hunter among the

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK.

Sioux an' killed more elk than did the ten best hunters of his village. So many elk did Strongarm slay that his squaw, the Blossom, made for their little son, Feather-foot, a buckskin coat on which was sewed the eye-teeth of elk, two for each elk, until there were so many eye-teeth on Feather-foot's buckskin coat it was like counting the leaves on a cottonwood to find how many there were. An' the Blossom was proud of Feather-foot's coat, for none among the Sioux had so beautiful a garment an' the eye-teeth of the elk told how big a hunter was Strongarm.

While the Sioux wondered an' admired at the elk-tooth coat, it made the Big Medicine Elk, who was chief of the Elk people, hot an' angry, an' turned his heart black against Strongarm. The Big Medicine Elk said he would have revenge.

Thus it happened one day that when Strongarm stepped from his lodge, he saw standing in front a great Elk who had antlers like the branches of a tree. An' the great Elk stamped his foot an' snorted at Strongarm. Then Strongarm took his bow an' his lance an' his knife an' hunted the great Elk to kill him; but the great Elk ran always a little ahead just out of reach.

At last the great Elk ran into the Pouch canyon an' then Strongarm took hope into his heart like a man takes air into his mouth, for the sides of the Pouch canyon were high an' steep an' it ended

THE BLACK LION INN.

with a high wall, an' nothing save a bird might get out again once it went in; for the Pouch canyon was a trap which the Great Spirit had set when the world was new.

Strongarm was happy in his breast as he followed the great Elk into the Pouch canyon for now he was sure. An' he thought how the big eye-teeth of so great an Elk would look on the collar of Feather-foot's buckskin coat.

When Strongarm came to the upper end of the Pouch canyon, there the great Elk stood waiting.

"Hold!" said the great Elk, when Strongarm put an arrow on his bowstring.

But Strongarm shot the arrow which bounded off the great Elk's hide an' made no wound. Then Strongarm ran against the great Elk with his lance, but the lance was broken as though the great Elk was a rock. Then Strongarm drew his knife, but when he went close to the great Elk, the beast threw him down with his antlers an' put his forefoot on Strongarm an' held him on the ground.

"Listen," said the great Elk, an' Strongarm listened because he couldn't help it. "You have hunted my people far an' near; an' you can never get enough of their blood or their eye-teeth. I am the Big Medicine Elk an' chief of the Elk people; an' now for a vengeance against you, I shall change you from the hunter to the hunted,



"THE ELK FEAR WAS IN HIS HEART."

THE GREAT
AMERICAN

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK

an' you shall know how good it is to have fear an' be an elk."

As the great Elk said this, Strongarm felt his head turn heavy with antlers, while his nose grew long an' his mouth wide, an' hair grew out of his skin like grass in the moon of new grass, an' his hands an' feet split into hoofs; an' then Strongarm stood on his four new hoofs an' saw by his picture in the stream that he was an elk. Also the elk-fear curled up in his heart to keep him ever in alarm; an' he snuffed the air an' walked about timidly where before he was Strongarm and feared nothing.

Strongarm crept home to his lodge, but the Blossom did not know her husband; an' Feather-foot, his little son, shot arrows at him; an' as he ran from them, the hunters of his village came forth an' chased him until Strongarm ran into the darkness of the next night as it came trailing up from the East, an' the darkness was kind an' covered him like a blanket an' Strongarm was hid by it an' saved.

When Strongarm did not come with the next sun to spear fish for Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear went to Strongarm's lodge to seek him for he thought that he was sick. An' Moh-Kwa asked the Blossom where was Strongarm? An' the Blossom said she did not know; that Strongarm chased the great Elk into the Pouch canyon an' never came out again; an' now a big Doubt had

THE BLACK LION INN.

spread its blankets in her heart an' would not leave, but was making a long camp, saying she was a widow. Then the Blossom wept; but Moh-Kwa told her to wait an' he would see, because he, Moh-Kwa, owed Strongarm for many fish an' would now pay him.

Moh-Kwa went to the Big Medicine Elk.

"Where is the Strongarm?" said Moh-Kwa.

"He runs in the hills an' is an elk," said the Big Medicine Elk. "He killed my people for their teeth, an' a great fright was on all my people because of the Strongarm. The mothers dare not go down to the river's edge to drink, an' their children had no time to grow fat for they were ever looking to meet the Strongarm. Now he is an elk an' my people will have peace; the mothers will drink an' their babies be fat an' big, being no more chased by the Strongarm."

Then Moh-Kwa thought an' thought, an' at last he said to the Big Medicine Elk:

"That is all proud talk. But I must have the Strongarm back, for he catches my fish."

But the Big Medicine Elk said he would not give Moh-Kwa back the Strongarm.

"Why should I?" asked the Big Medicine Elk.

"Did not I save you in the Yellowstone," said Moh-Kwa, "when as you swam the river a drifting tree caught in your antlers an' held down your head to drown you? An' did you not bawl to me who searched for berries on the bank; an'

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK.

did I not swim to you an' save you from the tree?" Still the Big Medicine Elk shook his antlers.

"What you say is of another day. You saved me an' that is ended. I will not give you back the Strongarm for that. One does not drink the water that is gone by."

Moh-Kwa then grew so angry his eyes burned red like fire, an' he threatened to kill the Big Medicine Elk. But the Big Medicine Elk laughed like the fish laughed, for he said he could not be killed by any who lived on the land.

"Then we will go to the water," said Moh-Kwa; an' with that he took the Big Medicine Elk in his great hairy arms an' carried him kicking an' struggling to the Yellowstone; for Moh-Kwa could hold the Big Medicine Elk though he could not hurt him.

When Moh-Kwa had carried the Big Medicine Elk to the river, he sat down on the bank an' waited with the Big Medicine Elk in his arms until a tree came floating down. Then Moh-Kwa swam with the Big Medicine Elk to the tree an' tangled the branches in the antlers of the Big Medicine Elk so that he was fast with his nose under the water an' was sure to drown.

"Now you are as you were when I helped you," said Moh-Kwa.

An' the Catfish people in the river came with joy an' bit the legs of the Big Medicine Elk, an'

THE BLACK LION INN

said, "Thank you, Moh-Kwa; you do well to bring us food now an' then since you eat so many fish."

As Moh-Kwa turned to swim again to the bank, he said over his shoulder to the Big Medicine Elk:

"Now you may sing your death song, for Pauguk, the Death, is in the river with you an' those are Pauguk's catfish which gnaw your legs."

At this the Big Medicine Elk said between his cries of grief an' fear that if Moh-Kwa would save him out of the river, he would tell him how to have the Strongarm back. So Moh-Kwa went again an' freed the Big Medicine Elk from the tree an' carried him to the bank, while the Catfish people followed, angrily crying:

"Is this fair, Moh-Kwa? Do you give an' then do you take away? Moh-Kwa! you are a Pawnee!"

When the Big Medicine Elk had got his breath an' wiped the tears from his eyes, he told Moh-Kwa that the only way to bring the Strongarm back to be a hunter from being one of the hunted was for Feather-foot, his son, to cut his throat; an' for the Blossom, his squaw, to burn his elk-body with cedar boughs.

"An' why his son, the Feather-foot?" asked Moh-Kwa.

"Because the Feather-foot owes the Strong-

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK.

arm a life," replied the Big Medicine Elk. "Is not Strongarm the Feather-foot's father an' does not the son owe the father his life?"

Moh-Kwa saw this was true talk, so he let the Big Medicine Elk go free.

"I will even promise that the Strongarm," said Moh-Kwa, as the two parted, "when again he is a Sioux on two legs, shall never hunt the Elk people."

But the Big Medicine Elk, who was licking his fetlocks where the Catfish people had hurt the skin, shook his antlers an' replied:

"It is not needed. The Strongarm has been one of the Elk people an' will feel he is their brother an' will not hurt them."

Moh-Kwa found it a hard task to capture Strongarm when now he was an elk with the elk-fear in his heart. For Strongarm had already learned the elk's warning which is taught by all the Elk people, an' which says:

Look up for danger and look down for gain;
Believe no wolf's word, and avoid the plain.

Strongarm would look down for the grass with one eye, while he kept an eye up among the branches or along the sides of the canyon for fear of mountain lions. An' he stuck close in among the hills, an' would not go out on the plains where the wolves lived; an' he wouldn't talk with a wolf or listen to his words.

THE BLACK LION INN.

But Strongarm, while he ran an' hid from Moh-Kwa an' the others, was not afraid of the Blossom, who was his squaw, but would come to her gladly if he might find her alone among the trees.

"It is not the first time," said the Wise Bear, "that the hunter has made his trap of love."

With that he told the Blossom to go into the hills an' call Strongarm to her with her love. Then she was to bind his feet so that he might not get away an' run.

The Blossom called Strongarm an' he came; but he was fearful an' suspicious an' his nose an' his ears an' his eyes kept guard until the Blossom put her hand on his neck; an' then Strongarm's great love for the Blossom smothered out his caution as one might smother a fire with a robe; an' the Blossom tied all his feet with thongs an' bound his eyes with her blanket so that Strongarm might not see an' be afraid.

Then came Feather-foot, gladly, an' cut Strongarm's throat with his knife; for Feather-foot did not know he killed his father—for that was a secret thing with Moh-Kwa an' the Blossom—an' thought only how he killed a great Elk.

When Strongarm was dead, Moh-Kwa toiled throughout the day carrying up the big cedar; an' when a pile like a hill was made, Moh-Kwa put Strongarm's elk-body on its top, an' brought fire from his house in the rocks, an' made a great burning.

HOW STRONGARM WAS AN ELK.

In the morning, the Blossom who had stayed with Moh-Kwa through the night while the fire burned, said, "Now, although the big elk is gone into ashes, I do not yet see the Strongarm." But Moh-Kwa said, "You will find him asleep in the lodge." An' that was a true word, for when Moh-Kwa an' the Blossom went to the lodge, there they found Strongarm whole an' good an' as sound asleep as a tree at midnight.

Outside the lodge they met the little Feather-foot who cried, "Where is the big elk, Moh-Kwa, that I killed?" An' the Blossom showed him his father, Strongarm, where he slept, an' said, "There is your big elk, Feather-foot; an' this will ever be your best hunting for it found you your father again."

When Moh-Kwa saw that everything was settled an' well, an' that he would now have always his regular fish, he wiped the sweat out of his eyes with his paws which were all singed fur an' ashes, an' said, "I am the weariest bear along the whole length of the Yellowstone, for I carried some heavy trees an' have worked hard. Now I will sleep an' rest."

An' with that Moh-Kwa lay down an' snored an' slept four days; then he arose an' eat up the countless fish which Strongarm had speared to be ready for him. This done, Moh-Kwa lighted his pipe of kinnikinick, an' softly rubbing his stomach where the fish were, said: "Fish give Moh-Kwa a good heart."

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Now that is what I call a pretty story,” said the Jolly Doctor.

“It is that,” observed the Red Nosed Gentleman, with emphasis. “And I’ve no doubt the Strongarm made it a point thereafter to be careful as to what game he hunted. But, leaving fable for fact, my friend,”—the Red Nosed Gentleman addressed now the Sour Gentleman—“would you not call it your turn to uplift the spirits of this company? We have just enough time and I just enough burgundy for one more story before we go to bed.”

“While our friend, the Sioux Gentleman,” responded the Sour Gentleman, “was unfolding his interesting fable, my thoughts—albeit I listened to him and lost never a word—were to the rear with the old days which came on the back of that catastrophe of tobacco. They come to me most clearly as I sit here smoking and listening, and with your permission I’ll relate the story of The Smuggled Silk.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

Should your curiosity invite it, and the more since I promised you the story, we will now, my friends, go about the telling of that one operation in underground silk. It is not calculated to foster the pride of an old man to plunge into a relation of dubious doings of his youth. And yet, as I look backward on that one bit of smuggling of which I was guilty, so far as motive was involved, I exonerate myself. I looked on the government, because of the South's conquest by the North, and that later ruin of myself through the machinations of the Revenue office, as both a political and a personal foe. And I felt, not alone morally free, but was impelled besides in what I deemed a spirit of justice to myself, to wage war against it as best I might. It was on such argument, where the chance proffered, that I sought wealth as a smuggler. I would deplete the government—forage, as it were, on the enemy—thereby to fatten my purse.

As my hair has whitened with the sifting frosts of years, I confess that my sophistries of smug-

THE BLACK LION INN.

gling seem less and less plausible, while smuggling itself loses whatever of romantic glamour it may once have been invested with, or what little color of respect to which it might seem able to lay claim. This tale shall be told in simplest periods. That is as should be; for expression should ever be meek and subjugated when one's story is the mere story of a cheat. There is scant room in such recital for heroic phrase. Smuggling, and paint it with what genius one may, can be nothing save a skulking, hiding, fear-eaten trade. There is nothing about it of bravery or dash. How therefore and avoid laughter, may one wax stately in any telling of its ignoble details?

When, following my unfortunate crash in tobacco, I had cleared away the last fragment of the confusion that reigned in my affairs, I was driven to give my nerves a respite and seek a rest. For three months I had been under severest stress. When the funeral was done—for funeral it seemed to me—and my tobacco enterprise and those hopes it had so flattered were forever laid at rest, my soul sank exhausted and my brain was in a whirl. I could neither think with clearness nor plan with accuracy. Moreover, I was prey to that depression and lack of confidence in myself, which come inevitably as the corollary of utter weariness.

Aware of this personal condition, I put aside

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

thought of any present formulation of a future. I would rest, recover poise, and win back that optimism that belongs with health and youth.

This was wisdom; I was jaded beyond belief; and fatigue means dejection, and dejection spells pessimism, and pessimism is never sagacious nor excellent in any of its programmes.

For that rawness of the nerves I speak of, many apply themselves to drink; some rush to drugs; for myself, I take to music. It was midwinter, and grand opera was here. This was fortunate. I buried myself in a box, and opened my very pores to those nerve-healthful harmonies.

In a week thereafter I might call myself recovered. My soul was cool, my eye bright, my mind clear and sensibly elate. Life and its promises seemed mightily refreshed.

No one has ever called me superstitious and yet to begin my course-charting for a new career, I harked back to the old Astor House. It was there that brilliant thought of tobacco overtook me two years before. Perhaps an inspiration was to dwell in an environment. Again I registered, and finding it tenantless, took over again my old room. Still I cannot say, and it is to that hostelry's credit, that my domicile at the Astor aided me to my smuggling resolves. Those last had growth somewhat in this fashion:

I had dawdled for two hours over coffee in the café—the room and the employment which had

THE BLACK LION INN.

one-time brought me fortune—but was incapable of any thought of value. I could decide on nothing good. Indeed, I did naught save mentally curse those revenue miscreants who, failing of blackmail, had destroyed me for revenge.

Whatever comfort may lurk in curses, at least they carry no money profit; so after a fruitless session over coffe and maledictions, I arose, and as a calmative, walked down Broadway.

At Trinity churchyard, the gates being open, I turned in and began ramblingly to twine and twist among the graves. There I encountered a garrulous old man who, for his own pleasure, evidently, devoted himself to my information. He pointed out the grave of Fulton, he of the steamboats; then I was shown the tomb of that Lawrence who would “never give up the ship;” from there I was carried to the last low bed of the love-wrecked Charlotte Temple.

My eye at last, by the alluring voice and finger of the old guide, was drawn to a spot under the tower where sleeps the Lady Cornbury, dead now as I tell this, hardby two hundred years. Also I was told of that Lord Cornbury, her husband, once governor of the colony for his relative, Queen Anne; and how he became so much more efficient as a smuggler and a customs cheat, than ever he was as an executive, that he lost his high employ.

Because I had nothing more worthy to occupy

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

my leisure, I listened—somewhat listlessly, I promise you, for after all I was thinking on the future, not the past, and considering of the living rather than those old dead folk, obscure, forgotten in their slim graves—I listened, I say, to my gray historian; and somehow, after I was free of him, the one thing that remained alive in my memory was the smuggling story of our Viscount Cornbury.

Among those few acquaintances I formed during my brief prosperity, was one with a gentleman named Harris, who owned apartments under mine on Twenty-second Street. Harris was elegant, educated, traveled, and apparently well-to-do of riches. Busy with my own mounting fortunes, the questions of who Harris was? and what he did? and how he lived? never rapped at the door of my curiosity for reply.

One night, however, as we sat over a late and by no means a first bottle of wine, Harris himself informed me that he was employed in smuggling; had a partner-accomplice in the Customs House, and perfect arrangements aboard a certain ship. By these last double advantages, he came aboard with twenty trunks, if he so pleased, without risking anything from the inquisitiveness or loquacity of the officers of the ship; and later debarked at New York with the certainty of going scatheless through the customs as rapidly as his Inspector

THE BLACK LION INN.

partner could chalk scrawlingly "O. K." upon his sundry pieces of baggage.

Coming from Old Trinity, still mooting Cornbury and his smugglings, my thoughts turned to Harris. Also, for the earliest time, I began to consider within myself whether smuggling was not a field of business wherein a pushing man might grow and reap a harvest. The idea came to me to turn "free-trader." The government had destroyed me; I would make reprisal. I would give my hand to smuggling and spoil the Egyptian.

At once I sought Harris and over a glass of champagne—ever a favorite wine with me—we struck agreement. As a finale we each put in fifteen thousand dollars, and with the whole sum of thirty thousand dollars Harris pushed forth for Europe while I remained behind. Harris visited Lyons; and our complete investment was in a choicest sort of Lyons silk. The rich fabrics were packed in a dozen trunks—not all alike, those trunks, but differing, one from another, so as to prevent the notion as they stood about the wharf that there was aught of relationship between them or that one man stood owner of them all.

It is not needed to tell of my partner's voyage of return. It was without event and one may safely abandon it, leaving its relation to Harris himself, if he be yet alive and should the spirit him so move. It is enough for the present pur-

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

pose that in due time the trunks holding our precious silk-bolts, with Harris as their convoy, arrived safe in New York.

I had been looking for the boat's coming and was waiting on the wharf as her lines and her stagings were run ashore.

Our partner, the Inspector, and who was to enjoy a per cent. of the profits of the speculation, was named Lorns. He rapidly chalked "O. K." with his name affixed to the end of each several trunk and it thereupon with the balance of inspected baggage was promptly piled upon the wharf.

There had been a demand for drays, I remember, and on this day when our silks came in, I was able to procure but one. The ship did not dock until late in the afternoon, and at eight o'clock of a dark, foggy April evening, there still remained one of our trunks—the largest of all, it was—on the wharf. The dray had departed with the second load for that concealing loft in Reade Street which, during Harris' absence, I had taken to be used as the depot of those smuggling operations wherein we might become engaged. I had made every move with caution; I had never employed our real names not even with the drayman.

As I tell you, the dray was engaged about the second trip. This last large silk-trunk was left behind perforce; pile it how one might there had

THE BLACK LION INN.

been no safe room for it on the already overloaded dray. The drayman promised to return and have it safely in our loft that night.

For myself, I was from first to last lounging about the wharf, overseeing the going away of our goods. Harris, so soon as I gave him key and street-number, had posted to Reade Street to attend the silk's reception.

Waiting for the coming back of the conveying dray proved but a slow, dull business, and I was impatiently, at the hour I've named, walking up and down, casting an occasional glance at the big last trunk where it stood on end, a bit drawn out and separated from the common mountain of baggage wherewith the wharf was piled.

One of the general inspectors, a man I had never seen but whom I knew, by virtue of his rank, to be superior to our chalk-wielding coparcener, also paced the wharf and appeared to bear me company in a distant, non-communicative way. This customs captain and myself, save for an under inspector named Quin, had the dock to ourselves. The boat was long in and most land folk had gotten through their concern with her and wended homeward long before. There were, however, many passengers of emigrant sort still held aboard the ship.

As I marched up and down, Lorns came ashore and pretended some business with his superior officer. As he returned to the ship and what

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

duties he had still to perform there, he made a slight signal to both myself and his fellow inspector, Quin, to follow him. I was well known to Lorns, having had several talks with him, while Harris was abroad. Quin I had never met; but it quickly appeared that he was a confidant of Lorns, and while without money interest in our affairs was ready to bear helping hand should the situation commence to pinch.

Quin and I went severally and withal carelessly aboard ship, and not at all as though we were seeking Lorns. This was to darken the chief, whom we both surmised to be the cause of Lorn's signal.

Once aboard and gathered in a dark corner, Lorns began at once:

"Let me do the talking," said Lorns with a nervous rapidity that at once enlisted the ears of Quin and myself. "Don't interrupt, but listen. The chief suspects that last trunk. I can tell it by the way he acts. A bit later, when I come ashore, he'll ask to have it opened. Should he do so, we're lost; you and I." This last was to me. Then to Quin: "Do you see that long, bony Swiss, with the boots and porcelain pipe? He's in an ugly mood, doesn't speak English, and within one minute after you return to the wharf, he and I will be entangled in a rough and tumble riot. I'll attend to that. The row will be prodigious. The chief will be sent for to settle the war, and

THE BLACK LION INN.

when he leaves the wharf, Quin, don't wait; seize on that silk trunk and throw it into the river. There's iron enough clamped about the corners to sink it; besides, it's packed so tightly it's as heavy as lead, and will go to the bottom like an anvil. Then from the pile pull down some trunk similar to it in looks and stand it in its place. It'll go in the dark. Give the new trunk my mark, as the chief has already read the name on the trunk. Go, Quin; I rely on you."

"You can trust me, my boy," retorted Quin, cheerfully, and turning on his heel, he was back on the wharf in a moment, and apparently busy about the pile of baggage.

Suddenly there came a mighty uproar aboard ship. Lorns and the Swiss, the latter already irate over some trouble he had experienced, were rolling about the deck in a most violent scrimmage, the Swiss having decidedly the worst of the trouble. The chief rushed up the plank; Lorns and the descendant of Tell and Winkelried, were torn apart; and then a double din of explanation ensued. After ten minutes, the chief was able to straighten out the difficulty—whatever its pretended cause might be I know not; for I held myself warily aloof, not a little alarmed by what Lorns had communicated—and repaired again to his station upon the wharf.

As the chief came down the plank, Quin, who had not been a moment behind him in going

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

aboard to discover the reasons of the riot, followed. Brief as was that moment, however, during which Quin had lingered behind, he had made the shift suggested by Lorns; the silk trunk was under the river, a strange trunk stood in its stead.

As the chief returned, he walked straight to this suspected trunk and tipped it down with his foot. Then to Quin:

“Ask Lorns to step here.”

Quin went questing Lorns; shortly Lorns and Quin came back together. The chief turned in a brisk, sharp, official way to Lorns:

“Did you inspect this trunk?”

“I did,” said Lorns, looking at the chalk marks as if to make sure.

“Open it!”

No keys were procurable; the owners, Lorns said, had long since left the docks. But Lorns suggested that he get hammer and cold-chisel from the ship.

The trunk was opened and found free and innocent of aught contraband. The chief wore a puzzled, dark look; he felt that he'd been cheated, but he couldn't say how. Therefore, being wise, the chief gulped, said nothing, and as life is short and he had many things to do, soon after left the docks and went his way.

“That was a squeak!” said Lorns when we were at last free of the dangerous chief. “Quin, I thank you.”

THE BLACK LION INN.

“That’s all right,” retorted Quin, with a grin; “do as much for me some time.”

That night, with the aid of a river pirate, our trunk, jettisoned by the excellent Quin, was fished up; and being tight as a drum, its contents had come to little harm with the baptism. At last, our dozen silk trunks—holding a treasure of thirty thousand dollars and whereon we looked to clear a heavy profit—were safe in the Reade Street loft; and my hasty heart, which had been beating at double speed since that almost fatal interference, slowed to normal.

One might now suppose our woes were at an end, all danger over, and nothing to do but dispose of that shimmering cargo to best advantage. Harris and I were of that spirit-lifting view; we began on the very next day to feel about for customers.

Harris, whose former smuggling exploits had dealt solely with gems, knew as little of silk as did I. Had either been expert he might have foreseen a coming peril into whose arms we in our blindness all but walked. No, our troubles were not yet done. We had escaped the engulfing suck of Charybdis, only to be darted upon by those six grim mouths of her sister monster, Scylla, over the way.

Well do I recall that morning. I had seen but two possible purchasers of silks when Harris overtook me. His eye shone with alarm. Lorns had

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

run him down with the news—however he himself discovered it, I never knew—that another danger yawned.

Harris hurried me to our Reade Street lair and gave particulars.

“It seems,” said Harris, quite out of breath with the speed we’d made in hunting cover, “that Stewart is for America the sole agent of these particular brands of silk which we’ve brought in. Some one to whom we’ve offered them has notified the Stewart company. At this moment and as we sit here, the detectives belonging to Stewart, and for all I may guess, the whole Central Office as well, are on our track. They want to discover who has these silks; and how they came in, since the customs records show no such importations. And there’s a dark characteristic to these silks. Each bolt has its peculiar, individual selvage. Each, with a sample of its selvage, is registered at the home looms. Could anyone get a snip of a selvage he could return with it to Lyons, learn from the manufacturers’ book just when it was woven, when sold, and to whom. I can tell you one thing,” observed Harris, as he concluded his story, “we’re in a bad corner.”

How the cold drops spangled my brows! I began to wish with much heart that I’d never met Harris, nor heard, that Trinity churchyard day, of Cornbury and his smuggling methods of gathering gold.

THE BLACK LION INN.

There was one ray of hope; neither Harris nor I had disclosed our names, nor the whereabouts or quantity of the silks; and as each had been dealing with folk with whom he'd never before met, we were both as yet mysteries unsolved.

Nor were we ever solved. Harris and I kept off the streets during daylight hours for a full month. We were not utterly idle; we unpleasantly employed ourselves in trimming away that tell-tale selvage.

Preferring safety to profit, we put forth no efforts to realize on our speculations for almost a year. By that time the one day's wonder of "Who's got Stewart's silks?" had ceased to disturb the mercantile world and the grand procession of dry goods interest passed on and over it.

At last we crept forth like felons—as, good sooth! we were—and disposed of our mutilated silks to certain good folk whose forefathers once ruled Palestine. These gentry liked bargains, and were in no wise curious; they bought our wares without lifting an eyebrow of inquiry, and from them constructed—though with that I had no concern—those long "circulars," so called, which were the feminine joy a third of a century gone.

As to Harris and myself; what with delays, what with expenses, what with figures reduced to dispose of our plunder, we got evenly out. We got back our money; but for those fear-shaken hours of two separate perils, we were never paid.

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

I smuggled no more. Still, I did not relinquish my pious purpose to despoil that public treasury Egyptian quoted heretofore. Neither did I give up the Customs as a rich field of illicit endeavor. But my methods changed. I now decided that I, myself, would become an Inspector, like unto the useful Lorns, and make my fortune from the opulent inside. I procured the coveted appointment, for I could bring power to bear, and later I'll tell you of The Emperor's Cigars.

When I was in my room that night, making ready for bed, I could still hear the soft, cold fingers of the snow upon the pane. What a storm was that! Our landlord who had been boy and man and was now gray in that old inn, declared how he had never witnessed the smothering fellow to it.

The following day, while still and bright and no snow to fall, showed a temperature below zero. The white blockade still held us fast, and now the desperate cold was come to be the ally of the snow. Departure was never a question.

As we kicked the logs into a cheerful uproar of sparks, and drew that evening about the great fireplace, it was the Old Cattleman to break conversational ground.

"Do you-all know," said he, "I shore feels

THE BLACK LION INN.

that idle this evenin' it's worse'n scand'lous—it's reedic'lous." Here he threw himself back in his armchair and yawned. "Pardon these yere demonstrations of weariness, gents," he observed; "they ain't aimed at you none. That's the fact, though; this amazin' sensation of bein' held a prisoner is beginnin' to gnaw at me a heap. Talk of 'a painted ship upon a painted ocean,' like that poem sharp wrote of! Why that vessel's sedyoolously employed compared to us!"

"You should recall," remarked the Jolly Doctor, "how somewhere it is said that whatever your hand finds to do, you should do it with all your heart. Now, I would say the counsel applies to our present position. Since we must needs be idle, let us be idle heartily and happily, and get every good to lie hidden in what to me, at least, is a most pleasant companionship."

"I shore unites with you," responded the Old Cattleman, "in them script'ral exhortations to do things with all your heart. It was Wild Bill Hickox's way, too; an' a Christian adherence to that commandment, not only saves Bill's life, but endows him with the record for single-handed killin's so far as we-all has accounts."

"Is it a story?" asked the Red Nosed Gentleman. "Once in a while I relish a good blood and thunder tale."

"It's this a-way," said the Old Cattleman. "Bill's hand is forced by the Jake McCandlas

THAT SMUGGLED SILK.

gang. Bill has 'em to do ; an' rememberin', doubtless, the Bible lessons of his old mother back in Illinois, he shore does 'em with all his heart, as the good book says. This yere is the story of 'The Wiping Out of McCandlas.' ”

CHAPTER XII.

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

Tell you-all a tale of blood? It shore irritates me a heap, gents, when you eastern folks looks allers to the west for stories red an' drippin' with murder. Which mighty likely now the west is plenty peaceful compared with this yere east itse'f. Thar's one thing you can put in your mem'randum book for footure ref'rence, an' that is, for all them years I inhabits Arizona an' Texas an' sim'lar energetic localities, I never trembles for my life, an' goes about plumb furtive, expectin' every moment is goin' to be my next that a-way, until I finds myse'f camped on the sunrise side of the Alleghenies.

Nacherally, I admits, thar has been a modicum of blood shed west an' some slight share tharof can be charged to Arizona. No, I can't say I deplores these killin's none. Every gent has got to die. For one, I'm mighty glad the game's been rigged that a-way. I'd shore hesitate a lot to be born onless I was shore I'd up an' some day cash in. Live forever? No, don't confer on me no sech gloomy outlook. If a angel was to appear

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

in our midst an' saw off on me the news that I was to go on an' on as I be now, livin' forever like that Wanderin' Jew, the information would stop my clock right thar. I'd drop dead in my moc-casins.

It don't make much difference, when you gives yourse'f to a ca'm consid'ration of the question as to when you dies or how you dies. The important thing is to die as becomes a gent of sperit who has nothin' to regret. Every one soon or late comes to his trail's end. Life is like a faro game. One gent has ten dollars, another a hundred, another a thousand, and still others has rolls big enough to choke a cow. But whether a gent is weak or strong, poor or rich, it's written in advance that he's doomed to go broke final. He's doomed to die. Tharfore, when that's settled, of what moment is it whether he goes broke in an hour, or pikes along for a week—dies to-day or postpones his funeral for years an' mebbby decades?

Holdin' to these yere views, you can see without my tellin' that a killin', once it be over, ain't likely to harass me much. Like the rest of you-all, I've been trailin' out after my grave ever since I was foaled—on a hunt for my sepulcher, you may say—an' it ought not to shock me to a showdown jest because some pard tracks up ag'inst his last restin' place, spreads his blankets an' goes into final camp before it come my own turn.

THE BLACK LION INN.

But, speakin' of killin's, the most onusual I ever hears of is when Wild Bill Hickox cleans up the Jake McCandlas gang. This Bill I knows intimate; he's not so locoed as his name might lead a gent to conclode. The truth is, he's a mighty crafty, careful form of sport; an' he never pulled a gun ontill he knew what for an' never onhooked it ontill he knew what at.

An' speakin' of the latter—the onhookin' part—that Wild Bill never missed. That's his one gift; he's born to make a center shot whenever his six-shooter expresses itse'f.

This McCandlas time is doorin' them border troubles between Missouri an' Kansas. Jest prior tharunto, Bill gets the ill-will of the Missouri outfit by some gun play he makes at Independence, then the eastern end of the old Santa Fe trail. What Bill accomplishes at Independence is a heap effectual an' does him proud. But it don't endear him none to the Missouri heart. Moreover, it starts a passel of resentful zealots to lookin' for him a heap f'rocious, an' so he pulls his freight.

It's mebbby six months later when Bill is holdin' down a stage station some'eres over in Kansas—it's about a day's ride at a road-gait from Independence—for Ben Holiday's overland line. Thar's the widow of a *compadre* of Bill who has a wickeyup about a mile away, an' one day Bill gets on his hoss, Black Nell, an' goes romancin' over to see how the widow's gettin' on. This

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

Black Nell hoss of Bill's is some cel'brated. Black Nell is tame as a kitten an' saveys more'n a hired man. She'd climb a pa'r of steps an' come sa'n-terin' into a dance hall or a hurdy gurdy if Bill calls to her, an' I makes no doubt she'd a-took off her own saddle an' bridle an' gone to bed with a pa'r of blankets, same as folks, if Bill said it was the proper antic for a pony.

It's afternoon when Bill rides up to pow-wow with this relict of his pard. As he comes into the one room—for said wickeyup ain't palatial, an' consists of one big room, that a-way, an' a jim-crow leanto—Bill says:

"Howdy, Jule?" like that.

"Howdy, Bill?" says the widow. "'Light an' rest your hat, while I roam 'round an' rustle some chuck." This widow has the right idee.

While Bill is camped down on a stool waitin' for the promised *carne* an' flap-jacks, or whatever may be the grub his hostess is aimin' to on-loose, he casts a glance outen the window. He's interested at once. Off across the plains he discerns the killer, McCandlas an' his band p'intin' straight for the widow's. They're from Missouri; thar's 'leven of 'em, corral count, an' all "bad."

As they can see his mare, Black Nell, standin' in front of the widow's, Bill argues jestly that the McCandlas outfit knows he's thar; an' from the speed they're makin' in their approach, he likewise

THE BLACK LION INN.

dedoocees that they're a heap eager for his company.

Bill don't have to study none to tell that thar's somebody goin' to get action. It's likely to be mighty onequal, but thar's no he'p; an' so Bill pulls his gun-belt tighter, an' organizes to go as far as he can. He has with him only one six-shooter; that's a severe setback. Now, if he was packin' two the approaching warjig would have carried feachers of comfort. But he's got a nine-inch bowie, which is some relief. When his six-shooter's empty, he can fall back on the knife, die hard, an' leave his mark.

As Bill rolls the cylinder of his gun to see if she's workin' free, an' loosens the bowie to avoid delays, his eye falls on a rifle hangin' above the door.

"Is it loaded, Jule?" asks Bill.

"Loaded to the gyards," says the widow.

"An' that ain't no fool of a piece of news, neither," says Bill, as he reaches down the rifle. "Now, Jule, you-all better stampede into the cellar a whole lot ontill further orders. Thar's goin' to be heated times 'round yere an' you'd run the resk of gettin' scorched."

"I'd sooner stay an' see, Bill," says the widow. "You-all knows how eager an' full of cur'osity a lady is," an' here the widow beams on Bill an' simpers coaxin'ly.

"An' I'd shore say stay, Jule," says Bill, "if

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

you could turn a trick. But you sees yourse'f, you couldn't. An' you'd be in the way."

Thar's a big burrow out in the yard; what Kansas people deenominates as a cyclone cellar. It's like a cave; every se'f-respectin' Kansas fam'ly has one. They may not own no bank account; they may not own no good repoote; but you can gamble, they've got a cyclone cave.

Shore, it ain't for ornament, nor yet for ostentation. Thar's allers a breeze blowin' plenty stiff across the plains. Commonly, it's strenuous enough to pick up a empty bar'l an' hold it ag'inst the side of a buildin' for a week. Sech is the usual zephyr. Folks don't heed them none. But now an' then one of these yere cyclones jumps a gent's camp, an' then it's time to make for cover. Thar's nothin' to be said back to a cyclone. It'll take the water outen a well, or the money outen your pocket, or the ha'r off your head; it'll get away with everything about you incloodin' your address. Your one chance is a cyclone cellar; an' even that refooge ain't no shore-thing, for I knowed a cyclone once that simply feels down an' pulls a badger outen his hole. Still, sech as the last, is onfrequent.

The widow accepts Bill's advice an' makes for the storm cave. This leaves Bill happy an' easy in his mind, for it gives him plenty of room an' nothin' to think of but himse'f. An' Bill shore admires a good fight.

THE BLACK LION INN.

He don't have long to wait after the widow stampedes. Bill hears the sweep of the 'leven McCandlas hosses as they come chargin' up. No, he can't see; he ain't quite that weak-minded as to be lookin' out the window.

As the band halts, Bill hears McCandlas say:

"Shore, gents; that's Wild Bill's hoss. We've got him treed an' out on a limb; to-morry evenin' we'll put that long-ha' red skelp of his in a showcase in Independence." Then McCandlas gives a whoop, an' bluffs Bill to come out. "Come out yere, Bill; we needs you to decide a bet," yells McCandlas. "Come out; thar's no good skulk-in'."

"Say, Jake," retorts Bill; "I'll gamble that you an' your hoss thieves ain't got the sand to come after me. Come at once if you comes; I despises delays, an' besides I've got to be through with you-all an' back to the stage station by dark."

"I'll put you where thar ain't no stage lines, Bill, long before dark," says McCandlas. An' with that he comes caperin' through the window, sash, glass, an' the entire lay-out, as blithe as May an' a gun in each hand.

Bill cuts loose the Hawkins as he's anxious to get the big gun off his mind. It stops McCandlas, "squar' in the door," as they says in monte; only it's the window. McCandlas falls dead outside.

"An' I'm sorry for that, too," says Bill to himself. "I'm premature some about that shot. I

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

oughter let Jake come in. Then I could have got his guns."

When McCandlas goes down, the ten others charges with a whoop. They comes roarin' through every window; they breaks in the door; they descends on Bill's fortress like a 'possum on a partridge nest!

An' then ensoos the busiest season which any gent ever cuts in upon. The air is heavy with bullets an' thick with smoke. The walls of the room later looks like a colander.

It's a mighty fav'able fight, an' Bill don't suffer none in his repoote that Kansas afternoon. Faster than you can count, his gun barks; an' each time thar's a warrior less. One, two, three, four, five, six; they p'int out after McCandlas an' not a half second between 'em as they starts. It was good luck an' good shootin' in combination.

It's the limit; six dead to a single Colt's! No gent ever approaches it but once; an' that's a locoed sharp named Metzger in Raton. He starts in with Moulton who's the alcade, an' beefs five an' creases another; an' all to the same one gun. The public, before he can reload, hangs Metzger to the sign in front of the First National Bank, so he don't have much time to enjoy himse'f reviewin' said feats.

Rifle an' six-shooter empty; seven dead an' done, an' four to take his knife an' talk it over

THE BLACK LION INN.

with! That's the situation when Bill pulls his bowie an' starts to finish up.

It shore ain't boy's play; the quintette who's still prancin' about the field is as bitter a combination as you'd meet in a long day's ride. Their guns is empty, too; an' they, like Bill, down to the steel. An' thar's reason to believe that the fight from this p'int on is even more interestin' than the part that's gone before. Thar's no haltin' or hangin' back; thar ain't a bashful gent in the herd. They goes to the center like one man.

Bill, who's as quick an' strong as a mountain lion, with forty times the heart an' fire, grips one McCandlas party by the wrist. Thar's a twist an' a wrench an' Bill onj'int's his arm.

That's the last of the battle Bill remembers. All is whirl an' smoke an' curse an' stagger an' cut an' stab after that, with tables crashin' an' the wreck an' jangle of glass.

But the end comes. Whether the struggle from the moment when it's got down to the bowies lasts two minutes or twenty, Bill never can say. When it's over, Bill finds himse'f still on his feet, an' he's pushin' the last gent off his blade. Split through the heart, this yere last sport falls to the floor in a dead heap, an' Bill's alone, blood to both shoulders.

Is Bill hurt? Gents, it ain't much likely he's put 'leven fightin' men into the misty beyond, the final four with a knife, an' him plumb scatheless! No,

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

Bill's slashed so he wouldn't hold hay; an' thar's more bullets in his frame than thar's pease in a pod. The Doc who is called in, an' who prospects Bill, allers allowed that it's the mistake of his life he don't locate Bill an' work him for a lead mine.

When the battle is over an' peace resoomes its sway, Bill begins to stagger. An' he's preyed on by thirst. Bill steadies himse'f along the wall; an' weak an' half blind from the fogs of fightin', he feels his way out o' doors.

Thar's a tub of rain-water onder the eaves; it's the only thing Bill's thinkin' of at the last. He bends down to drink; an' with that, faints an' falls with his head in the tub.

It's the widow who rescoos Bill; she emerges outen her cyclone cellar an' saves Bill from drownin'. An' he lives, too; lives to be downed years afterward when up at Deadwood a timid party who don't dare come 'round in front, drills Bill from the r'ar. But what can you look for? Folks who lives by the sword will perish by the sword as the scripters sets forth, an' I reckons now them warnin's likewise covers guns.

"And did that really happen?" asked the Red Nosed Gentleman, drawing a deep breath.

"It's as troo as that burgundy you're absorb-in'," replied the Old Cattleman.

THE BLACK LION INN.

"I can well believe it," observed the Sour Gentleman; "a strong hour makes a strong man. Did this Wild Bill Hickox wed the widow who pulled him out of the tub?"

"Which I don't think so," returned the Old Cattleman. "If he does, Bill keeps them nuptials a secret. But it's a cinch he don't. As I says at the jump, Bill is a mighty wary citizen an' not likely to go walkin' into no sech ambuscade as a widow."

"You do not think, then," observed the Red Nosed Gentleman, "that a wife would be a blessing?"

"She wouldn't be to Wild Bill Hickox," said the Old Cattleman. "Thar is gents who ought never to wed, an' Bill's one. He was bound to be killed final; the game law was out on Bill for years. Now when a gent is shore to cash in that a-way, why should he go roundin' up a wife? Thar oughter be a act of congress ag'in it, an' I onderstand that some sech measure is to be introduced."

"Passing laws," remarked the Jolly Doctor, "is no such easy matter, now, as passing the bottle." Here the Jolly Doctor looked meaningly at the Red Nosed Gentleman, who thereupon shoved the burgundy into the Jolly Doctor's hand with all conceivable alacrity. Like every good drinker, the Red Nosed Gentleman loved a cup companion. "There was a western person," went

THE WIPING OUT OF M'CANDLAS.

on the Jolly Doctor, " named Jim Britt, who came east to have a certain law passed; he didn't find it flowers to his feet."

" What now was the deetails? " said the Old Cattleman. " The doin's an' plottin's an' double-plays of them law-makin' mavericks in congress is allers a heap thrillin' to me."

" Very well," responded the Jolly Doctor; " let each light a fresh cigar, for it's rather a long story, and when all are comfortable, I'll give you the history of ' How Jim Britt Passed His Bill. ' "

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

Last Chance was a hamlet in southeastern Kansas. Last Chance, though fervid, was not large. Indeed, a cowboy in a spirit of insult born of a bicker with the town marshal had said he could throw the loop of his lariat about Last Chance and drag it from the map with his pony. However, this was hyperbole.

Jim Britt was not the least conspicuous among the men of Last Chance. Withal, Jim Britt was much diffused throughout the commerce of that village and claimed interests in a dozen local establishments, from a lumber yard to a hotel. Spare of frame, and of an anxious predatory nose, was Jim Britt; and his gray eyes ever roving for a next investment; and the more novel the enterprise, the more leniently did Jim Britt regard it. The new had for him a fascination, since he was in way and heart an Alexander and hungered covetously for further worlds to conquer. Thus it befell that Jim Britt came naturally to his desire to build a railway when the exigencies of his affairs opened gate to the suggestion.

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

Jim Britt became the proprietor of a lead mine—or was it zinc?—in southeastern Missouri, and no mighty distance from his own abode of Last Chance. The mine was somewhat thrust upon Jim Britt by Fate, since he accepted it for a bad debt. It was “lead mine or nothing,” and Jim Britt, whose instincts, like Nature, abhorred a vacuum, took the mine. It was a good mine, but a drawback lurked in the location; it lay over the Ozark Hills and far away from any nearest whistle of a railroad.

This isolation taught Jim Britt the thought of connecting his mine by rail with Last Chance; the latter was an easiest nearest point, and the route offered a most accommodating grade. A straight line, or as the crow is said to fly but doesn't, would make the length of the proposed improvement fifty miles. When done, it would serve not only Jim Britt's mine, but admirably as a feeder for the Fort Scot and Gulf; and Jim Britt foresaw riches in that. Altogether, the notion was none such desperate scheme.

There was a side serious, however, which must be considered. The line would cross the extreme northeast angle of the Indian Territory, or as it is styled in those far regions, the “Nation,” and for this invasion of redskin holdings the consent of the general government, through its Congress assembled, must be secured.

Jim Britt, far from being depressed, said he

THE BLACK LION INN.

would go to Washington and get it; he rather reveled in the notion. Samantha, his wife, shook her head doubtfully.

“Jim Britt,” said Samantha, severely, “you ain’t been east since Mr. Lincoln was shot. You know no more of Washington than a wolf. I’d give that railroad up; and especially, I’d keep away from Congress. Don’t try to braid that mule’s tail”—Samantha was lapsing into the metaphor common of Last Chance—“don’t try to braid that mule’s tail. It’ll kick you plumb out o’ the stall.”

But Jim Britt was firm; the mule simile in no sort abated him.

“But what could you do with Congress?” persisted Samantha; “you, a stranger and alone?”

Jim Britt argued that one determined individual could do much; energy wisely employed would overcome mere numbers. He cited the ferocious instance of a dim relative of his own, a vivacious person yclept Turner, who because of injuries fancied or real, hung for years about the tribal flanks of the Comanches and potted their leading citizens. This the vigorous Turner kept up until he had corralled sixty Comanche top-nots; and the end was not yet when the Comanches themselves appealed to their agent for protection. They said they couldn’t assemble for a green corn dance, or about a regalement of baked dog, without the Winchester of the unauthorized

THE
COWBOY
OF
THE
SOUTHWEST



JIM BRITT.

TO AND FROM

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

Turner barking from some convenient hill; the squaws would then have nothing left but to wail the death song of some eminent spirit thus sifted from their midst. When they rode to the hill in hunt of Turner, he would be miles away on his pony, and adding to his safety with every jump. The Comanches were much disgusted, and demanded the agent's interference.

Upon this mournful showing, Turner was brought in and told to desist; and as a full complement of threats, which included among their features a trial at Fort Smith and a gibbet, went with the request, Turner was in the end prevailed on to let his Winchester sleep in its rack, and thereafter the Comanches danced and devoured dog unscared. The sullen Turner said the Comanches had slain his parent long ago; the agent expressed regrets, but stuck for it that even with such an impetus a normal vengeance should have run itself out with the conquest of those sixty scalps.

Jim Britt told this story of Turner to Samantha; and then he argued that as the Comanches were made to feel a one-man power by the industrious Turner, so would he, Jim Britt, for all he stood alone, compel Congress to his demands. He would take that right of way across the Indian Territory from between their very teeth. He was an American citizen and Congress was his servant; in this wise spake Jim Britt.

THE BLACK LION INN.

"That's all right," argued the pessimistic Samantha; "that's all right about your drunken Turner; but he had a Winchester. Now you ain't goin' to tackle Congress with no gun, Jim Britt."

Despite the gloomy prophecies of Samantha, whom Jim Britt looked on as a kind of Cassandra without having heard of Cassandra, our would-be railroad builder wound up the threads and loose ends of his Last Chance businesses, and having, as he described it, "fixed things so they would run themselves for a month," struck out for Washington. Jim Britt carried twenty-five hundred dollars in his pocket, confidence in his heart, and Samantha's forebode of darkling failure in his ears.

While no fop and never setting up to be the local Brummel, Jim Britt's clothes theretofore had matched both his hour and environment, and held their decent own in the van of Last Chance fashion. But the farther Jim Britt penetrated to the eastward in his native land, the more his raiment seemed to fall behind the age; and at the last, when he was fairly within the gates of Washington, he began to feel exceeding wild and strange. Also, it affected him somewhat to discover himself almost alone as a tobacco chewer, and that a great art preserved in its fullness by Last Chance had fallen to decay along the Atlantic. These, however, were questions of minor moment, and save that his rococo garb drove the

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

sensitive Jim Britt into cheap lodgings in Four-and-one-half Street, instead of one of the capital's gilded hotels, they owned no effect.

This last is set forth in defence against an imputation of parsimony on the side of Jim Britt. He was one who spent his money like a king whenever and wherever his education or experience pointed the way. It was his clothes of a remote period to make him shy, else Jim Britt would have shrunk not from the Raleigh itself, but climbed and clambered and browsed among the timberline prices of its grill-room, as safe and satisfied as ever browsed mountain goat on the high levels of its upland home. Yea, forsooth! Jim Britt, like a sailor ashore, could spend his money with a free and happy hand.

Jim Britt, acting on a hint offered of his sensibilities, for a first step reclothed himself from a high-priced shop; following these improvements, save for the fact that he appalled the eye as a trifle gorgeous, he might not have disturbed the sacred taste of Connecticut Avenue itself. In short, in the matter of garb, Jim Britt, while audible, was down to date.

With the confidence born of his new clothes—for clothes in some respects may make the man—Jim Britt sate him down to study Congress. He deemed it a citadel to be stormed; not lacking in military genius he began to look it over for a weak point.

THE BLACK LION INN.

These adventures of Jim Britt now about a record, occurred, you should understand, almost a decade ago. In that day there should have been eighty-eight senators and three hundred and fifty-six representatives, albeit, by reason of death or failure to elect, a not-to-be-noticed handful of seats were vacant.

By an industrious perusal of the Congressional directory, wherein the skeleton of each House was laid out and told in all its divers committee small-bones, Jim Britt began to understand a few of the lions in his path. For his confusion he found that Congress was sub-divided into full sixty committees, beginning with such giant conventions as the Ways and Means, Appropriations, Military, Naval, Coinage, Weights and Measures, Banking and Currency, Indian, Public Lands, Postal, and Pensions, and dwindling down to ignoble riffraff—which owned each a chairman, a committee room, a full complement of clerks and messengers, and an existence, but never convened—like the Committee on Acoustics and Ventliation, and Alcoholic Liquor Traffic.

Jim Britt learned also of the Sergeants at Arms of Senate and House, and how these dignitaries controlled the money for those bodies and paid the members their salaries. Incidentally, and by way of gossip, he was told of that House Sergeant who had levanted with the riches entrusted to his hands, and left the broken membership, gnashing

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

its teeth in poverty and impotent gloom, unable to draw pay.

Then, too, there was a Document Room where the bills and resolutions were kept when printed. Also, about each of the five doors of House and Senate, when those sacred gatherings were in session, there were situated a host of messengers, carried for twelve hundred dollars a year each on the Doorkeeper's rolls. It was the duty and pleasure of these myrmidons to bring forth members into the corridors, to the end that they be refreshed with a word of counsel from constituents who had traveled thither for that purpose; and in the finish to lend said constituents money to return home.

Jim Britt, following these first connings of the directory, went personally to the capitol, and from the galleries, leaning his chin on the rail the while, gazed earnestly on greatness about the transaction of its fame. These studies and personally conducted tours, and those conversations to be their incident which came off between Jim Britt and chance-blown folk who fell across his pathway, enlarged Jim Britt's store of information in sundry fashions. He discovered that full ten thousand bills and resolutions were introduced each Congress; that by virtue of a mere narrowness of time not more than five per cent. of this storm of business could be dealt with, the other ninety-five, whether for good or ill, being starved to death for

THE BLACK LION INN.

lack of occasion. The days themselves were no longer than five working hours since Congress convened at noon.

The great radical difference between House and Senate loomed upon Jim Britt in a contrast of powers which abode with the presiding officers of those mills to grind new laws. The president of the Senate owned few or none. He might enforce Jefferson's rules for debates and call a recalcitrant senator to order, a call to which the recalcitrant paid little heed beyond tart remarks on his part concerning his own high determinations to yield to no gavel tyranny, coupled with a forceful though conceited assurance flung to the Senate at large, that he, the recalcitrant, knew his rights (which he never did), and would uphold them (which he never failed to do.) The Senate president named no committees; owned no control over the order of business; indeed he was limited to a vote on ties, a warning that he would clear the galleries (which was never done) when the public therein roosting, applauded, and the right to prevent two senators from talking at one and the same time. These marked the utmost measure of his influence. Any senator could get the floor for any purpose, and talk on any subject from Prester John to Sheep in the Seventeenth Century, while his strength stood. Also, and much as dogs have kennels permitted them for their habitation, the presiding officer of the Senate

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

—in other words, the Vice-President of the nation—was given a room, separate and secluded to himself, into which he might creep when chagrin for his own unimportance should overmaster him or otherwise his woes become greater than he might publicly bear.

The House Speaker was a vastly different cock, with a louder crow and longer spur. The Speaker was a king, indeed; and an absolute monarch or an autocrat or what you will that signifies one who may do as he chooses, exercise unbridled will, and generally sit beneath the broad shadows of the vine and the fig tree of his prerogatives with none to molest him or make him afraid. The Speaker was, so to phrase it, the entire House, the other three hundred and fifty-five members acting only when he consented or compelled them, and then usually by his suggestion and always under his thumb. No bill could be considered without the Speaker's permission; and then for so long only as he should allow, and by what members he preferred. No man could speak to a measure wanting the gracious consent of this dignitary; and no word could be uttered—at least persisted in—to which he felt distaste. The Speaker, when lengths and breadths are measured, was greater than the Moscow Czar and showed him a handless infant by comparison.

As a half-glove of velvet for his iron hand, and to mask and soften his pure autocracy—which if

THE BLACK LION INN.

seen naked might shock the spirit of Americanism—there existed a Rules Committee. This subbody, whereof the Speaker was chief, carried, besides himself, but two members; and these he personally selected, as indeed he did the entire membership of every committee on the House muster-rolls. This Rules Committee, with the Speaker in absolute sway, acted with reference to the House at large as do the Board of Judges for a racecourse. It declared each day what bills should be taken up, limited debate, and to pursue the Track simile to a last word, called on this race or cleared the course of that race, and fairly speaking dry-nursed the House throughout its travels, romps and lessons.

Jim Britt discovered that in all, counting Speaker, Rules Committee, and a dozen chairmen of the great committees, there existed no more than fifteen folk who might by any stretch of veracity be said to have a least of voice in the transaction of House business. In the gagged and bound cases of the other three hundred and forty-one, and for what public good or ill to flow from them, their constituents would have fared as well had they, instead of electing these representatives, confined themselves to writing the government a letter setting forth their wants.

In reference to his own bill, Jim Britt convinced himself of two imposing truths. Anybody would and could introduce it in either House or Senate

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

or in both at once; then, when thus introduced and it had taken the routine course to the proper committee, the situation would ask the fervent agreement of a majority in each body, to say nothing of the Speaker's consent—a consent as hard to gain as a girl's—to bring it up for passage.

Nor was there any security of concert. The bill might be fashionable, not to say popular, with one body, while the other turned rigid back upon it. It might live in the House to die in the Senate, or succeed in the Senate and perish in the House. There were no safety and little hope to be won in any corner, and the lone certainty to peer forth upon Jim Britt was that the chances stood immeasurably against him wherever he turned his eyes. The camel for the needle's eye and the rich man into heaven, were easy and feasible when laid side by side with the Congressional outlook for his bill.

While Jim Britt was now sensibly cast down and pressed upon by despair, within him the eagerness for triumph grew taller with each day. For one daunting matter, should he return empty of hand, Samantha would wear the fact fresh and new upon her tongue's end to the last closing of his eyes. It would become a daily illustration—an hourly argument in her practiced mouth.

There was one good to come to Jim Britt by his investigations and that was a good instruction. Like many another, Jim Britt, from the deceitful

THE BLACK LION INN.

distance of Last Chance, had ever regarded both House and Senate as gigantic conspiracies. They were eaten of plot and permeated of intrigue; it was all chicane and surprise and sharp practice. Congress was a name for traps and gins and pits and snares and deadfalls. The word meant tunnels and trap-doors and vaults and dungeons and sinister black whatnot. Jim Britt never paused to consider wherefore Congress should, for ends either clean or foul, conceal within itself these midnight commodities of mask and dark-lantern, and go about its destiny a perennial Guy Fawkes, ready to explode a situation with a touch and blow itself and all concerned to far-spread flinders. Had he done so he might have dismissed these murky beliefs.

It is, however, never too late to mend. It began now to dawn upon Jim Britt by the morning light of what he read and heard and witnessed, that both Houses in their plan and movement were as simple as a wire fence; no more recondite than is a pair of shears. They might be wrong, but they were not intricate; they might spoil a deal of cloth in their cutting, or grow dull of edge or loose of joint and so not cut at all, but they were not mysterious. Certainly, Congress was no more a conspiracy than is a flock of geese, and a brooding hen would be as guilty of a plot and as deep given to intrigue. Congress was a stone wall or a precipice or a bridgeless gulf or

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

chloroform or what one would that was stupefying or difficult of passage to the border of the impossible, but there dwelt nothing occult or secret or unknowable in its bowels. These truths of simplicity Jim Britt began to learn and, while they did not cheer, at least they served to clear him up.

Following two weeks of investigation, Jim Britt secured the introduction of his bill. This came off by asking; the representative from the Last Chance district performing in the one body, while one of the Kansas senators acted in the more venerable convention.

Now when the bill was introduced, printed, and in the lap of the proper committee, Jim Britt went to work to secure the bill's report. He might as well have stormed the skies to steal a star; he found himself as helpless as a fly in amber.

About this hour in his destinies, Jim Britt made a radical and, as it turned, a decisive move. He had now grown used to Washington and Washington to him, and while folk still stared and many grinned, Jim Britt did not receive that ovation as he moved about which marked and made unhappy his earlier days in the town. Believing it necessary to his bill's weal, Jim Britt began to haunt John Chamberlin's house of call as then was, and to scrape acquaintance with statesmen who passed hours of ease and wine in its parlors.

In the commencement of his Chamberlin ex-

THE BLACK LION INN.

periences Jim Britt met much to affright him. A snowy-bearded senator from Nevada sat at a table. On seeing Jim Britt smile upon him in a friendly way—he was hoping to make the senator's acquaintance—he of the snow-beard, apropos of nothing, suddenly thundered:

“I have this day read John Sherman's defence of the Crime of 'Seventy-Three. John Sherman contends that no crime was committed because no criminals were caught.”

This outburst so dismayed Jim Britt that he sought a far corner and no more tempted the explosiveness of Snow-Beard.

Again, Jim Britt would engage a venerable senator from Alabama in talk. He was instantly taken by the helpless button, and for a quintette of hours told of the national need of a Panama Canal, and given a list of what railroads in their venality set the flinty face of their opposition to its coming about.

These things, the thunders of Snow-Beard and the exhaustive settings forth of the senator from the south, pierced Jim Britt; for he reflected that if the questions of silver and Panama could not be budged for their benefit by these gentlemen of beard and long experience and who dwelt well within the breastworks of legislation, then his bill for that small right of way, and none to aid it save himself in his poor obscurity, could hope for nothing except death and burial where it lay.

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

There was a gentleman of Congress well known and loved as the Statesman from Tupelo. He was frequent and popular about Chamberlin's. The Statesman from Tupelo was a humorist of celebration and one of the redeeming features of the House of Representatives. His eye fell upon the queer, ungainly form of Jim Britt, with hungry face, eyes keen but guileless, and nose of falcon curve.

The Statesman from Tupelo beheld in Jim Britt with his Gothic simplicity a self-offered prey to the spear of every joker. The Statesman from Tupelo, with a specious suavity of accent and a blandness irresistible, drew forth Jim Britt in converse. The latter, flustered, flattered, went to extremes of confidence and laid frankly bare his railroad hopes and fears which were now all fears.

The Statesman from Tupelo listened with decorous albeit sympathetic gravity. When Jim Britt was done he spoke:

"As you say," observed the Statesman from Tupelo, "your one chance is to get acquainted with a majority of both Houses and interest them personally in your bill."

"But how might a party do that soonest?" asked Jim Britt. "I don't want to camp yere for the balance of my days. Besides, thar's Samantha."

"Certainly, there's Samantha," assented the Statesman from Tupelo. Then following a pause:

THE BLACK LION INN.

“I suppose the readiest method would be to give a dinner. Could you undertake that?”

“Why, I reckon I could.”

The dinner project obtained kindly foothold in the breast of Jim Britt; he had read of such banquet deeds as a boy when the papers told the splendors of Sam Ward and the Lucullian day of the old Pacific Mail. Jim Britt had had no experience of Chamberlin prices, since his purchases at that hotel had gone no farther a-field than a now-and-then cigar. He had for most part subsisted at those cheap restaurants which—for that there be many threadbare folk, spent with their vigils about Congress, hoping for their denied rights—are singularly abundant in Washington. These modest places of regale would give no good notion of Chamberlin's, but quite the contrary. Wherefore, Jim Britt, quick with railway ardor and to get back to the far-away Samantha, took the urgent initiative, and said he would order the dinner for what night the Statesman from Tupelo deemed best, if only that potent spirit would agree to gather in the guests.

“We will have the dinner, then,” said He of Tupelo, “on next Saturday. You can tell Chamberlin; and I'll see to the guests.”

“How many?” said Chamberlin's steward, when he received the orders of Jim Britt.

The coming railway magnate looked at the Statesman from Tupelo.

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

"Say fifty," remarked the Statesman from Tupelo.

Jim Britt was delighted. He would have liked sixty guests better, or if one might, one hundred; but fifty was a fair start. There could come other dinners, for the future holds a deal of room. In time Jim Britt might dine a full moiety of Congress. The dinner was fixed; the menu left to the steward's ingenuity and taste; and now when the situation was thus relaid, and Saturday distant but two days, Jim Britt himself called for an apartment at Chamberlin's, sent for his one trunk, and established himself on the scene of coming dinner action to have instant advantage of whatever offered that might be twisted to affect his lead-mine road.

The long tables for Jim Britt's dinner were spread in a dining room upstairs. There were fifty covers, and room for twenty more should twenty come. The apartment itself was a jungle of tropical plants, and the ground plan of the feast laid on a scale of bill-threatening magnificence.

This was but right. For when the steward would have consulted the exultant Jim Britt whose florid imaginings had quite carried him off his feet, that gentleman said simply:

"Make the play with the bridle off! Don't pinch down for a chip."

Thereupon the steward cast aside restraint and wandered forth upon that dinner with a heart

THE BLACK LION INN.

care-free and unrestrained. He would make of it a moment of terrapin and canvas-back and burgundy which time should date from and folk remember for long to the Chamberlin praise.

Saturday arrived, and throughout the afternoon Jim Britt, by grace of the good steward, who had a pride of his work and loved applause, teetered in and out of the dining room and with dancing eye and mouth ajar gave rein to admiration. It would be a mighty dinner; it would land his bill in his successful hands, and make, besides, a story to amaze the folk of Last Chance to a standstill. These be not our words; rather they flowed as the advance jubilations of Jim Britt.

There was one thought to bear upon Jim Britt to bashful disadvantage. The prospect of entertaining fifty statesmen shook his confidence and took his breath. To repair these disasters he called privily from time to time for whiskey.

It was not over-long before he talked thickly his encomiums to the steward. On his last visit to survey that fairyland of a dining room, Jim Britt counted covers laid for several hundred guests; what was still more wondrous, he believed they would come and the prospect rejoiced him. There were as many lights, too, in the chandeliers as stars of a still winter's night, while the apartment seemed as large as a ten-acre lot and waved a broad forest of foliage.

That he might be certainly present on the ar-

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

rival of the first guest—for Jim Britt knew and felt his duties as a host—Jim Britt lay down upon a lounge which, to one side, was deeply, sweetly bowered beneath the overhanging palms. Then Jim Britt went earnestly to sleep and was no more to be aroused than a dead man.

The Statesman from Tupelo appeared; by twos and threes and tens, gathered the guests; Jim Britt slept on the sleep of innocence without a dream. A steering committee named to that purpose on the spot by the Statesman from Tupelo, sought to recover Jim Britt to a knowledge of his fortunate honors. Full sixty guests were there, and it was but right that he be granted the pleasure, not to say the glory, of their acquaintance.

It was of no avail; Jim Britt would not be withdrawn from slumbers deep as death. The steering committee suspended its labors of restoration. As said the chairman in making his report, which, with a wine glass in his hand, he subsequently did between soup and fish:

“Our most cunning efforts were fruitless. We even threw water on him, but it was like throwing water on a drowned rat.”

Thus did his slumbers defend themselves, and Jim Britt snore unchecked.

But the dinner was not to flag. The Statesman from Tupelo took the head of the table and the chairman of the steering committee the foot, the repast proceeded while wine and humor flowed.

THE BLACK LION INN.

It was a dream of a dinner, a most desirable dinner, a dinner that should stand for years an honor to Jim Britt of Last Chance. It raged from eight till three. Corks and jokes were popping while laughter walked abroad; speeches were made and songs were sung. Through it all, the serene founder of the feast slept on, and albeit eloquence took up his name and twined about it flowery compliment, he knew it not. Tranquilly on his lounge he abode in dear oblivion.

Things mundane end and so did Jim Britt's dinner. There struck an hour when the last song was sung, the last jest was made, and the last guest departed away. The Statesman from Tupelo superintended the transportation of Jim Britt to his room, and having made him safe, He of Tupelo went also out into the morning, and that famous banquet was of the perfumed past.

It dawned Wednesday before the Statesman from Tupelo called again at Chamberlin's to ask for the excellent Jim Britt. The Statesman from Tupelo explained wherefore he was thus laggard.

"I thought," he said to Chamberlin, "that our friend would need Sunday, Monday and Tuesday to straighten up his head."

"The man's gone," said Chamberlin; "he departed Monday morning."

"And whither?"

"Home to Last Chance."

"What did he go home for?"

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

“That dinner broke him, I guess. It cost about eighteen hundred dollars, and he only had a little over a hundred when the bill was paid.”

The Statesman from Tupelo mused, while clouds of regret began to gather on his brow. His conscience had him by the collar; his conscience was avenging that bankruptcy of Jim Britt.

The Statesman from Tupelo received Jim Britt's address from the hands of Chamberlin's clerk. The next day the Statesman from Tupelo wrote Jim Britt a letter. It ran thus:

Chamberlin's Hotel.

My Dear Sir:—

Don't come back. Write me in full the exact story of what you want and why you want it. I've got a copy of your bill from the Document Room, and so soon as I hear from you, shall urge the business before the proper committee.

When Jim Britt's reply came to hand, the Statesman from Tupelo—whom nobody could resist—prevailed on the committee to report the bill. Then he got the Speaker, who while iron with others was as wax in the hands of the Statesman from Tupelo, to recognize him to bring up the bill. The House, equally under his spell, gave the Statesman from Tupelo its unanimous consent, and the bill was carried in the blink of a moment to its third reading and put upon its passage. Then the

THE BLACK LION INN.

Statesman from Tupelo made a speech; he said it was a confession.

The Statesman from Tupelo talked for fifteen minutes while the House howled. He told the destruction of Jim Britt. He painted the dinner and pointed to those members of the House who attended; he reminded them of the desolation which their appetites had worked. He said the House was disgraced in the downfall of Jim Britt, and admitted that he and his fellow diners were culpable to a last extreme. But there was a way to repair all. The bill must be passed, the stain on the House must be washed away, Jim Britt must stand again on his fiscal feet, and then he, the Statesman from Tupelo, and his fellow conspirators, might once more look mankind in the eye.

There be those who will do for laughter what they would not do for right. The House passed Jim Britt's bill unanimously.

The Statesman from Tupelo carried it to the Senate. He explained the painful situation and described the remedy. Would the Senate unbend from its stern dignity as the greatest deliberative body of any clime or age, and come to the rescue of the Statesman from Tupelo and the House of Representatives now wallowing in infamy?

The Senate would; by virtue of a kink in Senate rules which permitted the feat, the Jim Britt Bill

HOW JIM BRITT PASSED HIS BILL.

was instantly and unanimously adopted without the intervention of a committee, the ordering a reference or a roll-call. The Statesman from Tupelo thanked the Senate and withdrew, pretending emotion.

There was one more journey to make, one more power to consult, and the mighty work would be accomplished. The President must sign the bill. The Statesman from Tupelo walked in on that tremendous officer of state and told him the tale of injury done Jim Britt. The Statesman from Tupelo, by way of metaphor, called himself and his fellow sinners, cannibals, and showed how they had eaten Jim Britt. Then he reminded the President how he had once before gone to the rescue of cannibals in the case of Queen Lil. Would he now come to the relief of the Statesman from Tupelo and his fellow Anthropophagi of the House?

The President was overcome with the word and the idea; he scribbled his name in cramped copper-plate, and the deed was done. The Jim Britt Bill was a law, and Jim Britt saved from the life-long taunts of Samantha, the retentive. The road from Last Chance to the lead mine was built, and on hearing of its completion the Statesman from Tupelo wrote for an annual pass.

“Then it was luck after all,” said the Red

THE BLACK LION INN.

Nosed Gentleman, "rather than management to save the day for your Jim Britt."

"Entirely so," conceded the Jolly Doctor.

"There's a mighty deal in luck," observed the Red Nosed Gentleman, sagely. "Certainly, it's the major part in gambling, and I think, too, luck is a decisive element in every victory or defeat a man experiences."

"And, now," observed the Sour Gentleman, "now that you mention gambling, suppose you redeem your promise and give us the story of 'How to Tell the Last Four.' The phrase is dark to me and has no meaning, but I inferred from what you were saying when you used it, that you alluded to some game of chance. Assuredly, I crave pardon if I be in error," and now the Sour Gentleman bowed with vast politeness.

"You are not in error," returned the Red Nosed Gentleman, "and I did refer to gambling. Casino, however, when played by Casino Joe was no game of chance, but of science; his secret, he said in explanation, lay in 'How to Tell the Last Four.'"

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

Casino Joe, when thirty years ago he came about the Bowery, was in manner and speech a complete expression of the rustical. His brow was high and fine and wise; but lank hair of yellow spoiled with its ragged fringe his face—a sallow face, wide of mouth and with high cheek bones. His garb was farmerish; kip-skin boots, coat and trousers of gray jeans, hickory shirt, and soft shapeless hat. Nor was Casino Joe in disguise; these habiliments made up the uniform of his ancestral New Hampshire. Countryman all over, was Casino Joe, and this look of the uncouth served him in his chosen profession.

Possibly “chosen” as a term is indiscreet. Gamblers are born and not made; they occur and they do not choose; they are, compared with more conservative and lawful men, what wolves are to honest dogs—cousins, truly, but tameless depredators, living lean and hard, and dying when die they do, neglected, lone and poor. Yet it is fate; they are born to it as much as is the Ishmael wolf and must run their midnight downhill courses.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Gamblers, that is true gamblers, are folk of specialties. Casino Joe's was the game which gave to him his name—at casino he throve invincibly.

“It is my gift,” he said.

Two things were with Casino Joe at birth; the genius for casino and that jack-knife talent to whittle which belongs with true-born Yankees. Of this latter I had proof long after poor Casino Joe was dead and nourishing the grass. The races were in Boston; it was when Goldsmith Maid reigned Queen of the trotting turf. Her owner came to me at the Adams House and told how the aged sire of Goldsmith Maid, the great Henry Clay, was in his equine, joint-stiffened dotage pastured on a not too distant farm. He was eager to have a look at the old horse; and I went with him for this pilgrimage.

As we drove up to the tavern which the farmstead we sought surrounded, my curious eye was caught by a fluttering windmill contrivance perched upon the gable. It was the figure of a woman done in pine and perhaps four feet of height, carved in the somewhat airy character of a ballet dancer. Instead of a dance, however, the lady contented herself with an exhibition of Indian Club swinging—one in each pine palm; the breeze offering the whirling impulse—in the execution wherof she poised herself with one foot on a wooden ball not unlike the arrowing bronze

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

Diana of Madison Square. This figure, twirling clubs, as a mere windmill would have been amazing enough; but as though this were not sufficiently wondrous, at regular intervals our ballet dancer shifted her feet on the ball, replacing the right with the left and again the left with the right in measured alternation. The miracle of it held me transfixed.

The host came fatly to his front stoop and smiled upon my wide-eyed interest.

“Where did you get it?” I asked.

“That was carved with a jack-knife,” replied mine host, “by a party called ‘Casino Joe.’ It took him ’most a year; he got it mounted and goin’ jest before he died.”

For long I had lost trace of Casino Joe; it was now at this change house I blundered on the news how my old gambling friend of the Bowery came with his consumption and some eight thousand dollars—enough to end one’s life with—and made this place home until his death. His grave lay across a field in the little rural burying ground where he had played when a boy, for Casino Joe was native of these parts.

There were no cheatings or tricky illicitisms hidden in Joe’s supremacies of casino. They were works of a wax-like memory which kept the story of the cards as one makes entries in a ledger. When the last hands were out between Joe and an adversary, a glance at his mental en-

THE BLACK LION INN.

tries of cards already played, and another at his own hand, unerringly informed him of what cards his opponent held. This he called "Telling the last four."

It was as an advantage more than enough to enable Joe to win; and while I lived in his company, I never knew him to be out of pocket by that divertimento. The marvel was that he could keep accurate track of fifty-two cards as they fell one after the other into play, and do these feats of memory in noise-ridden bar-rooms and amid a swirl of conversation in which he more or less bore part.

Those quick folk of the fraternity whom he encountered and who from time to time lost money to Casino Joe, never once suspected his victories to be a result of mere memory. They held that some cheat took place. But as it was not detectable and no man might point it out, no word of fault was uttered. Joe took the money and never a protest; for it is as much an axiom of the gaming table as it is of the law that "Fraud must be proved and will never be presumed or inferred." With no evidence, therefore, the losing gamblers made no protesting charge, and Joe went forward collecting the wealth of any and all who fought with him at his favorite science.

Casino Joe, as I have said, accounted for his

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

mastery at casino by his power to "Tell the last four," and laid it all to memory.

"And yet," said Joe one evening as I urged him to impart to me his secret more in detail, "it may depend on something else. As I've told you, it's my gift. Folk have their gifts. Once when I was in the town of Warrensburg in Western Missouri, I was shown a man who had gifts for mathematics that were unaccountable. He was a coarse, animalish creature, this mathematician; a half idiot and utterly without education. A sullen, unclean beast of a being, he shuffled about in a queer, plantigrade fashion like a bear. He was ill-natured, yet too timid to do harm; and besides a genius for figures, his distinguishing characteristics were hunger measured by four men's rations and an appetite for whiskey which to call swinish would be marking a weakness on one's own part in the art of simile. Yet this witless creature, unable to read his own printed name, knew as by an instinct every mathematical or geometrical term. You might propose nothing as a problem that he would not instantly solve. He could tell you like winking, the area of a seven or eight-angled figure so you but gave him the dimensions; he would announce the surface measurements of a sphere when told either its diameter or circumference. Once, as a poser, a learned teacher proposed a supposititious cone seven feet in altitude and with a diameter

THE BLACK LION INN.

of three feet at the base, and asked at what distance from the apex it should be divided to make both parts equal of bulk and weight. The gross, growling being made correct, unhesitating reply. This monster of mathematics seemed also to carry a chronometer in his stomach, for day or night, he could and would—for a drink of rum—tell you the hour to any splinter of a second. You might set your watch by him as if he were the steeple clock. I don't profess," concluded Casino Joe, "to either the habits or the imbecility of this genius of figures, yet it may well be that my abilities to keep track of fifty-two cards as they appear in play and know at every moment—as a bookkeeper does a balance—what cards are yet to come, are not of cultivation or acquirement, but were extant within me at my birth."

When Casino Joe appeared in the Bowery he came to gamble at cards. That buzzing thoroughfare was then the promenade of the watchful brotherhood of chance. In that hour, too, it stood more the fashion—for there are fashions in gambling as in everything else—to win and lose money at short-cards, and casino enjoyed particular vogue. There were scores of eminent practitioners about New York, and Joe had little trouble in securing recognition. Indeed, he might have played the full twenty-four hours of every day could he have held up his head to such labors.

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

There was at the advent of our rural Joe into metropolitan circles none more alert or breathless for pastmastery in unholy speculation than myself. About twenty-one should have been my years, and I carried that bubbling spirit for success common to the youth of every walk. *Aut Cæsar aut nullus!* was my warcry, and I did not consider Joe and his career for long before I was slave to the one hope of finally gaining his secret. One might find fortune on it; like the philosopher's stone it turned everything to gold.

With those others who fell before Joe I also believed his success to be offspring of some cheat. And while the rustic Joe was engaged against some fellow immoralist, I've sat and watched for hours upon end to discover what winding thing Joe did. There was no villainy of double dealing or chicane of cut-shifting or of marked cards at which I was not adept. And what I could so darkly perform I was equally quick to discover when another attempted it. But, albeit I eyed poor Joe with a cat's vigilance—a vigilance to have saved the life of Argus had he but emulated it with his hundred eyes—I noted nothing. And the reason was a simple one. There was literally nothing to discover; Joe played honestly enough; his advantage dwelt in his memory and that lay hidden within his head.

Despairing of a discovery by dint of watching, I made friendly overtures to Joe, hoping to

THE BLACK LION INN.

wheedle a secret which I could not surprise. My proffers of comradeship were met more than half way. Joe was a kindly though a lonely soul and had few friends; his queer garb of the cowpastures together with his unfailing domination at casino kept others of the fraternity at a distance. Also I had been much educated of books by Father Glennon, and put in my spare time with reading. As Joe himself had dived somewhat into books, we were doubly drawn to each other. Hours have we sat together in Joe's nobly furnished rooms—for he lived well if he did not dress well—and overhauled for our mutual amusement the literature of the centuries back to Chaucer and his Tabard Inn.

At this time Joe was already in the coils of that consumption whereof at last he died. And what with a racking cough and an inability to breathe while lying down, Joe seldom slept in a bed. The best he might do was to gain what snatches of slumber he could while propped in an arm-chair. It thus befell that at his suggestion and to tell the whole truth, at his generous expense, I came finally to room with Joe. Somebody should utilize the bed. Being young and sound of nerves, his restless night-roamings about the floors disturbed not me; I slept serenely through as I doubtless would through the crack of doom had such calamity surprised us at that

HÓW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

time, and Joe and I prospered bravely in company.

Beseech and plead as I might, however, Joe would not impart to me that hidden casino strength beyond his word that no fraud was practiced—a fact whereof my watchings had made me sure—and curtly describing it as an ability to “Tell the last four.”

While Joe housed me as his guest for many months and paid the bills, one is not to argue therefrom any unhappy pauperism on my boyish part. In good sooth! I was more than rich during those days, with a fortune of anywhere from five hundred to as many as four thousand dollars. Like all disciples of chance I had these riches ever ready in my pocket for what prey might offer.

It was now and then well for Joe that I went thus provided. That badly garbed squire of good dame Fortune, who failed not of a profit at casino, had withal an overpowering taste to play faro; and as if by some law of compensation and to preserve an equilibrium, he would seem to sit down to a faro layout only to lose.

Time and again he came to his rooms stripped of the last dollar. On these harrowing occasions Joe would borrow a round-number stake from me and so return to the legitimate sure harvests of casino, vowing never to lose himself and his money in any quicksands of farobank again.

THE BLACK LION INN.

It must be admitted that these anti-faro vows were never kept; once firm on his feet by virtue of casino renewed, it was not over long ere he "tried it just once more," to lose again. These faro bankruptcies would overtake Joe about once a month.

One day I made a mild plot; I had foregone all hope of coaxing Joe's secret from him; now I resolved to bring against him the pressure of a small intrigue. I lay in ambush for Joe, waylaid him as it were in the weak hour of his destitution and ravished from him at the point of his necessities that which I could come by in no other way.

It was following a disastrous night at faro when Joe appeared without so much silver in his pockets as might serve to keep the fiends from dancing there. Having related his losses he asked for the usual five hundred wherewith to re-enter the sure lists of casino and begin the combat anew.

To his sore amazement and chagrin—and somewhat to his alarm, for at first he thought me as poor as himself from my refusal—I shook my sage young head.

"Haven't you got it?" asked Joe anxiously.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "I've got it; and it's yours on one condition. Teach me how to 'Tell the last four,' and you may have five hundred and five hundred with it."

Then I pointed out to Joe his mean unfairness in not equipping me with this resistless knowl-

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

edge. Save for that one pregnant secret I was as perfect at casino as any sharper on the Bowery. Likewise, were the situation reversed, I'd be quick to instruct him. I'd lend no more; there would come no further five hundred save as the price of that touchstone—the golden secret of how to “Tell the last four.” This I set forth jealously.

“Why, then,” said Joe, “I'll do my best to teach you. But it will cost a deal of work. You'll have to put in hours of practice and curry and groom and train your memory as if it were a horse for a great race. I tell you the more readily—for I could elsewhere easily get the five hundred and for that matter five thousand other dollars to keep it company—since I believe I've not many months to live at best”—here, as if in confirmation, a gust of coughing shook him—“and this secret shall be your legacy.”

With these words, Joe got a deck of cards and began a game of casino with me as an adversary. Slowly playing the cards, he explained and strove to illustrate those mental methods by which he kept account and tabbed them as they were played. If I could lay bare this system here I would; but its very elaboration forbids. It was as though Joe owned a blackboard in his head with the fifty-two cards told off by numbers in column, and from which he erased a card the moment it appeared in play. By processes of

THE BLACK LION INN.

elimination, he came finally to "Tell the last four," and as the last hands were dealt knew those held by his opposite as much as ever he knew his own. This advantage, with even luck and perfect skill made him not to be conquered.

It took many sittings with many lessons many hours long; but in time because of my young faculties—not too much cumbered of those thousand and one concerns to come with years and clamor for remembrance—I grew as perfect as Joe.

And it was well I learned the secret when I did. Soon after, I became separated from Joe; I went southward to New Orleans and when I was next to New York Joe had disappeared. Nor could I find trace or sign of his whereabouts. He went in truth to his old village, and my earliest information thereof came only when the tavern host told the origin of the club-swinging ballet dancer then toeing it so gallantly on his gables.

But while I parted with my friend, I never forgot him. The knowledge he gave double-armed me at the game. It became the reason of often riches in my hands, and was ever a resort when I erred over horse races or was beaten down by some storm of faro. Then it was profitably I recalled Casino Joe and his instructions; and his invincible secret of "How to tell the last four."

HOW TO TELL THE LAST FOUR.

“Is it not strange,” said the Jolly Doctor, when the Red Nosed Gentleman had finished, “that I who never cared to gamble, should listen with delight to a story of gamblers and gambling? But so it is; I’ve heard scores such in my time and always with utmost zest. I’ll even tell one myself—as it was told me—when it again becomes my duty to furnish this good company entertainment. Meanwhile, unless my memory fails, it should be the task of our descendant of Hiawatha”—here the Jolly Doctor turned smilingly to Sioux Sam—“to take up the burden of the evening.”

The Old Cattleman, joining with the Jolly Doctor in the suggestion, and Sioux Sam being in no wise loth to be heard, our half-savage friend related “How Moh-Kwa Fed the Catfish.”

CHAPTER XV.

HOW MOH-KWA FED THE CATFISH.

One day Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, had a quarrel with Ish-koo-dah, the Fire. Moh-Kwa was gone from home two days, for Moh-Kwa had found a large patch of ripe blackberries, an' he said it was prudent to stay an' eat them all up lest some other man find them. So Moh-Kwa stayed; an' though he ate very hard the whole time an' never slept, so many an' fat were the blackberries, it took two suns to eat them.

When Moh-Kwa came into his cavern, he found Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, grown small an' hot an' angry, for he had not been fed for two days. Moh-Kwa gave the Fire a bundle of dry wood to eat, an' when the Fire's stomach was full an' he had grown big an' bright with plenty, he sat up on his bed of coals an' found fault with Moh-Kwa for his neglect.

"An' should you neglect me again for two days," said the Fire, "I will know I am not wanted an' shall go away."

Moh-Kwa was much tired with no sleep, so he answered Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, sharply.

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

"You are always hungry," said Moh-Kwa; "also you are hard to suit. If I give you green wood, you will not eat it; if the wood be wet, you turn away. Nothing but old dry wood will you accept. Beggars like you should not own such fine tastes. An' do you think, Fire, that I who have much to do an' say an' many places to go—I, Moh-Kwa, who am as busy as the bees in the Moon of Blossoms, have time to stay ever by your side to pass you new dry wood to eat? Go to; you are more trouble than a papoose!"

Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, did not say anything to this, for the Fire's feelings were hurt; an' Moh-Kwa who was heavy with his labors over the blackberries lay down an' took a big sleep.

When Moh-Kwa awoke, he sat blinking in the darkness of his cavern, for Ish-koo-dah, while Moh-Kwa slept, had gone out an' left night behind.

For five days Moh-Kwa had no fire an' it gave him a bad heart; for while Moh-Kwa could eat his food raw an' never cared for that, he could not smoke his kinnikinick unless Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, was there to light his pipe for him.

For five days Moh-Kwa smoked no kinnikinick; an' Moh-Kwa got angry because of it an' roared an' shouted up an' down the canyons, an' to show he did not care, Moh-Kwa smashed his redstone pipe on a rock. But in his stomach Moh-Kwa cared, an' would have traded Ish-koo-

THE BLACK LION INN.

dah, the Fire, four armsful of dry cedar just to have him light his kinnikinick but once. But Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, was gone out an' would not come back.

Openhand, the good Sioux an' great hunter, heard Moh-Kwa roaring for his kinnikinick. An' Openhand told him he behaved badly, like a young squaw who wants new feathers an' cannot get them. Then Openhand gave Moh-Kwa another pine, an' brought the Fire from his own lodge; an' again Moh-Kwa's cavern blazed with Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, in the middle of the floor, an' Moh-Kwa smoked his kinnikinick. An' Moh-Kwa's heart felt good an' soft an' pleasant like the sunset in the Moon of Fruit. Also, he gave Ish-koo-dah plenty of wood to eat an' never scolded him for being always hungry.

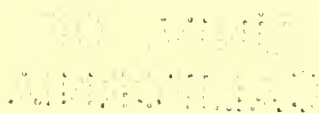
All the Sioux loved Openhand; for no one went by his lodge empty but Openhand gave him a piece of buffalo meat; an' if a Sioux was cold, he put a blanket about his shoulders. An' for this he was named "Openhand," an' the Sioux were never tired of talking good talk of Openhand, an' the noise of his praises never died out.

Coldheart hated Openhand because he was so much loved. Coldheart was himself sulky an' hard, an' his hand was shut tight like a beaver-trap that is sprung, an' it would not open to give anything away. Those who came hungry went hungry for all of Coldheart; an' if they were cold,

THE OPEN HAND



THE OPEN HAND.



they were cold. Coldheart wrapped his robes the closer, an' was the warmest whenever he thought the frost-wolf was gnawing others.

"I do not rule the ice," said Coldheart; "hunger does not come or go on its war-trail by my orders. An' if the Sioux freeze or starve, an' Pau-guk, the Death, walks among the lodges, it is because the time is Pau-guk's an' I cannot help it."

So Coldheart kept his blankets an' his buffalo meat for himself an' his son, the Blackbird, an' gave nothing away. An' for these things, Coldheart was hated while Openhand was praised; an' the breast of Coldheart was so eaten with his wrath against Openhand that it seemed as though Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, had gone into Coldheart's bosom an' made a camp.

Coldheart would have called Pau-guk to his elbow an' killed Openhand; but Coldheart was not sure. The Openhand moved as quick as a fish in the Yellowstone, an' stood as tall an' strong as the big pine on the hill; there were no three warriors, the bravest of the Sioux, who could have gone on the trail of Openhand an' shown his skelp on their return, for Openhand was a mighty fighter an' had a big heart, so that even Fear himself was afraid of Openhand an' never dared come where he was.

Coldheart knew well that he could not fight with Openhand; for to find this out, he made his

THE BLACK LION INN.

strongest medicine an' called Jee-bi, the Spirit; an' Jee-bi talked with Pau-guk, the Death, an' asked Pau-guk if Coldheart went on the trail of Openhand to take his skelp, which one Pau-guk would have at the trail's end. An' Pau-guk said he would have Coldheart, for Openhand would surely kill him. When Jee-bi, the Spirit, told Coldheart the word of Pau-guk, Coldheart saw then that he must go a new trail with his hate.

Coldheart smoked an' smoked many pipes; but the thoughts of Openhand an' how he was loved by the Sioux made his kinnikinick bitter. Still Coldheart smoked; an' at last the thought came that if he could not kill Openhand, he would kill the Young Wolf, who was Openhand's son. When this thought folded its wings an' perched in the breast of Coldheart, he called for the evil Lynx, who was Coldheart's friend, an' since he was the wickedest of the Sioux, would do what Coldheart said.

The Lynx came an' sat with Coldheart in his lodge; an' the lodge was closed tight so that none might listen, an' because it was cold. The Coldheart told the Lynx to go with his war-axe when the next sun was up an' beat out the brains of the Young Wolf.

"An' when he is dead," said Coldheart, "you must bring me the Young Wolf's heart to eat. Then I will have my revenge on Openhand, his father, whom I hate; an' whenever I meet the

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

Openhand I will laugh with the thought that I have eaten his son's heart."

But there was one who listened to Coldheart while he gave his orders to the evil Lynx, although she was no Sioux. This was the Widow of the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks who had long before been slain by Yellow Face, his brother medicine. The Widow having hunted long an' hard had crawled into the lodge of Coldheart to warm herself while she rested. An' as she slept beneath a buffalo robe, the noise of Coldheart talking to the evil Lynx woke the Widow up; an' so she sat up under her buffalo robe an' heard every word, for a squaw is always curious an' would sooner hear new talk than find a string of beads.

That night as Moh-Kwa smoked by Ish-koodah, the Fire, an' fed him dry sticks so he would not leave him again, the Widow came an' warmed herself by Moh-Kwa's side. An' Moh-Kwa asked the Widow how she fared; an' the Widow while hungry said she was well, only that her heart was made heavy by the words of Coldheart. Then the Widow told Moh-Kwa what Coldheart had asked the evil Lynx to do, an' how for his revenge against Openhand he would eat the Young Wolf's heart.

Moh-Kwa listened to the Widow with his head on one side, for he would not lose a word; an' when she had done, Moh-Kwa was so pleased

THE BLACK LION INN.

that he put down his pipe an' went to a nest which the owls had built on the side of the cavern an' took down a young owl an' gave it to the Widow to eat. An' the Widow thanked Moh-Kwa an' swallowed the little owl, while the old owl flew all about the cavern telling the other owls what Moh-Kwa had done. The owls were angry an' shouted at Moh-Kwa.

"The Catfish people said you were a Pawnee! But you are worse; you are a Shoshone, Moh-Kwa; yes, you are a Siwash! Bird-robber, little owl-killer, you an' your Rattlesnake Widow are both Siwashes!"

But Moh-Kwa paid no heed; he did not like the owls, for they stole his meat; an' when he would sleep, a company of the older owls would get together an' hold a big talk that was like thunder in Moh-Kwa's cavern an' kept him awake. Moh-Kwa said at last that if the owls called the Widow who was his guest a Siwash again, he would give her two more baby owls. With that the old owls perched on their points of rocks an' were silent, for they feared Moh-Kwa an' knew he was not their friend.

When the Widow had eaten her little owl, she curled up to sleep two weeks, for such was the Widow's habit when she had eaten enough. An' as she snored pleasantly, feathers an' owl-down were blown out through her nose, but the young owl was gone forever.

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

Moh-Kwa left the Widow sleeping an' went down the canyon in the morning to meet the evil Lynx where he knew he would pass close by the bank of the Yellowstone. An' when Moh-Kwa saw the evil Lynx creeping along with his war-axe in his hand on the trail of the Young Wolf's heart, he gave a great shout: "Ah! Lynx, I've got you!" An' then he started for the Lynx with his paws spread. For Moh-Kwa loved the Open-hand, who brought back to him Ish-koo-dah, the Fire, when he had gone out of Moh-Kwa's cavern an' would not return.

But Moh-Kwa did not reach the Lynx, for up a tree swarmed the Lynx out of Moh-Kwa's reach.

When Moh-Kwa saw the evil Lynx hugging close to the tree, the new thought made Moh-Kwa laugh. An' with that he reached up with his great arms an' began to bend down the tree like a whip. When Moh-Kwa had bent the tree enough, he let it go free; an' the tree sprang straight like an osage-orange bow. It was so swift an' like a whip that the Lynx could not hold on, but went whirling out over the river like a wild duck when its wing is broken by an arrow; an' then the Lynx splashed into the Yellowstone.

When the Lynx struck splashing into the Yellowstone, all the Catfish people rushed for him with the Big Chief of the Catfish at their head. Also, Ah-meek, the Beaver, was angry; for Ah-

THE BLACK LION INN.

meek was crossing the Yellowstone with a bundle of bulrushes in his mouth to help build his winter house on the bank, an' the Lynx struck so near to Ah-meek that the waves washed his face an' whiskers, an' he was startled an' lost the bulrushes out of his mouth an' they were washed away.

Ah-meek who was angry, an' the Catfish people who were hungry, charged on the Lynx; but the Lynx was not far enough from the shore for them, an' while the Catfish people pinched him an' Ah-meek, the Beaver, clawed him, the Lynx crawled out on the bank an' was safe.

But Moh-Kwa met the Lynx when he crawled out of the Yellowstone looking like Dah-hin-dah, the Bull-frog, an' Moh-Kwa picked him up with his paws to throw him back.

But a second new thought came; an' although the Catfish people screamed at him an' Ah-meek who had lost his bulrushes was black with anger, Moh-Kwa did not throw the Lynx back into the river but stood him on his feet an' told him what to do. An' when Moh-Kwa gave him the orders, the Lynx promised to obey.

Moh-Kwa killed a fawn; an' the Lynx took its heart in his hand an' went with it to Coldheart an' said it was the heart of Young Wolf. An' Coldheart roasted it an' ate it, thinking it was Young Wolf's heart.

For a day was the Coldheart glad, for he felt strong an' warm with the thought that now he

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

was revenged against Openhand; an' Coldheart longed to tell Openhand that he had eaten his son's heart. But Coldheart was too wise to make this boast; he knew that Openhand whether with knife or lance or arrow would give him at once to Pau-guk, an' that would end his revenge.

Still Coldheart thought he would go to Openhand's lodge an' feed his eyes an' ears with Openhand's groans an' mournings when now his son, the Young Wolf, was gone. But when Coldheart came to the lodge of Openhand, he was made sore to meet the Young Wolf who was starting forth to hunt. Coldheart spoke with the Young Wolf to make sure he had been cheated; an' then he went back to kill the Lynx.

But Coldheart was too late; the Lynx had not waited; now he was gone with his squaws an' his ponies an' his blankets to become a Pawnee. The Lynx was tired of being a Sioux.

When the Widow's sleep was out, Moh-Kwa sent her to hide in the lodge of Coldheart to hear what next he would plan. The Widow went gladly, for Moh-Kwa promised four more small young owls just out of the egg. The Widow lay under the buffalo robe an' heard the words of Coldheart. In a week, she came back to Moh-Kwa an' told him what Coldheart planned.

Coldheart had sent twenty ponies to the Black-foot chief, Dull Knife, where he lived on the banks

THE BLACK LION INN.

of the Little Bighorn. Also, Coldheart sent these words in the mouth of his runner :

“ My son and the son of my enemy will come to your camp in one moon. You will marry the Rosebud, your daughter, to my son, while the son of my enemy you will tie an’ give to your young men to shoot at with their arrows until he be dead, an’ afterward until they have had enough sport. My son will bring you a white arrow ; the son of my enemy will bring you a black arrow.”

Moh-Kwa laughed when he heard this from the Widow’s lips ; an’ because she had been faithful, Moh-Kwa gave her the four small owls just from the egg. An’ the older owls took it quietly an’ only whispered their anger ; for Moh-Kwa said that if they screamed an’ shouted when now he must sit an’ think until his head ached, he would knock down every nest.

When his plan was ripe, Coldheart put on a good face an’ went to the lodge of Openhand an’ gave him a red blanket an’ said he was Openhand’s friend. An’ Openhand an’ all the Sioux said this must be true talk because of the red blanket ; for Coldheart was never known to give anything away before.

Openhand an’ Coldheart sat down an’ smoked ; for Moh-Kwa had never told how Coldheart had sent the Lynx for the Young Wolf’s heart. Moh-Kwa never told tales ; moreover Moh-Kwa had also his own plans as well as Coldheart.

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

When Openhand an' Coldheart came to part, an' Coldheart was to go again to his own lodge, he asked that Openhand send his son, Young Wolf, with the Blackbird who would go to wed the young squaw, Rosebud, where she dwelt with Dull Knife, her father, in their camp on the Little Bighorn. An' Openhand did not hesitate, but said, "Yes;" an' the Young Wolf himself was glad to go, like all boys who hope to see new scenes.

As Young Wolf an' the Blackbird next day rode away, Coldheart stuck a black arrow in the cow-skin quiver of Young Wolf, an' a white arrow in that of the Blackbird, saying:

"Give these to the Dull Knife that he may know you are my sons an' come from me, an' treat you with much love."

Many days the young men traveled to reach Dull Knife's camp on the Little Bighorn. In the night of their last camp, Moh-Kwa came silently, an' while the young men slept swapped Coldheart's arrows; an' when they rode to the lodge of Dull Knife, an' while the scowling Blackfeet gathered about—for the sight of a Sioux gives a Blackfoot a hot heart—the black arrow was in the quiver of the Blackbird an' the white arrow in that of Young Wolf.

"How!" said the young men to Dull Knife.

"How! how!" said Dull Knife. "An' now, my sons, where are the arrows which are your countersigns?"

THE BLACK LION INN.

When the young men took out the arrows they saw that they had been changed; but they knew not their message an' thought no difference would come. So they made no talk since that would lose time; an' Young Wolf gave Dull Knife the white arrow while the Blackbird gave him the black arrow.

An' holding an arrow in each hand—one white, one black—Dull Knife said:

“For the twenty ponies which we have got, the Blackfeet will carry forth the word of Cold-heart; for the Blackfeet keep their treaties, being honest men.”

An' so it turns that the Blackbird is shot full of arrows until he bristles like the quills on the back of Kagh, the Hedgepig. But Young Wolf is taken to the Rosebud, an' they are married. The Young Wolf would have said: “No!” for he did not understand; but Dull Knife showed him first a war-axe an' next the Rosebud. An' the Rosebud was more beautiful in the eye of youth than any war-axe; besides Young Wolf was many days march from the lodge of his father, Openhand, an' marriage is better than death. Thinking all of which, the Young Wolf did not say “no” but said “yes,” an' at the wedding there was a great feast, for the Dull Knife was a big chief an' rich.

Ma-ma, the Woodpecker, stood on the top of a dead tree an' saw the wedding; an' when it was



THE COLDHEART.

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

over, he flew straight an' told Moh-Kwa so that Moh-Kwa might know.

When Young Wolf an' the Rosebud on their return were a day's ride from the Sioux, Moh-Kwa went to the lodge of Coldheart an' said:

"Come, great plotter, an' meet your son an' his new squaw."

An' Coldheart came because Moh-Kwa took him by his belts an' ran with him; for Moh-Kwa was so big an' strong he could run with a pony an' its rider in his mouth.

Moh-Kwa told Coldheart how the Blackbird gave Dull Knife the black arrow an' was shot with all the arrows of five quivers. Coldheart groaned like the buffalo when he dies. Then Moh-Kwa showed him where Young Wolf came on with the beautiful Rosebud; and that he was followed by twenty pack-ponies which carried the presents of Dull Knife for his daughter an' his new son.

"An' now," said Moh-Kwa, "you have seen enough; for you have seen that you have made your foe happy an' killed your own son. Also, I have cheated the Catfish people twice; once with the Big Medicine Elk an' once with the Lynx, both of whom I gave to the Catfish people an' took back. It is true, I have cheated the good Catfish folk who were once my friends, an' now they speak hard of me an' call me a 'Pawnee,' the whole length of the Yellowstone from the Missouri

THE BLACK LION INN.

to the Falls. However, Moh Kwa has something for the Catfish people this time which he will not take back, an' by to-morrow's sun, the river will ring with Moh-Kwa's praises."

Moh-Kwa carried Coldheart to the Yellowstone, an' he sang an' shouted for all the Catfish people to come. Then Moh-Kwa took Coldheart to a deep place in the river a long way from the bank. An' Moh-Kwa held Coldheart while the Chief of the Catfish got a strong hold, an' his squaw—who was four times bigger than the Catfish Chief—got also a strong hold; an' then what others of the Catfish people were there took their holds. When every catfish was ready Moh-Kwa let Coldheart slip from between his paws, an' with a swish an' a swirl, the Catfish people snatched Coldheart under the water an' tore him to pieces. For many days the Yellowstone was bank-full of good words for Moh-Kwa; an' all the Catfish people said he was a Sioux an' no cheat of a Pawnee who gives only to take back.

That night in his cavern Moh-Kwa sat by Ishkoo-dah, the Fire, an' smoked an' told the Widow the story, an' how it all began by Openhand bringing the Fire back to be his friend when they had quarreled an' the Fire had gone out an' would not return. An' while Moh-Kwa told the tale to the Widow, not an owl said a word or even whispered, but blinked in silence each on his perch; for the Widow seemed lean an' slim as she lay by

HOW MOH-KWAH FED CATFISH.

the fire an' listened; an' the owls thought it would be foolish to remind Moh-Kwa of their presence.

"Now, do you know," said the Red Nosed Gentleman, with his head on one side as one who would be deemed deeply the critic, "these Indian stories are by no means bad." Then leaning across to the Old Cattleman, he asked: "Does our Sioux friend make them up?"

"Them tales," said the Old Cattleman, lighting a new cigar, "is most likely as old as the Yellowstone itse'f. The squaws an' the old bucks tell 'em to the children, an' so they gets passed along the line. Sioux Sam only repeats what he's done heard from his mother."

"And now," remarked the Jolly Doctor, addressing the Sour Gentleman, "what say you? How about that story of the Customs concerning which you whetted our interest by giving us the name. It is strange, too, that while my interest is still as strong as ever, the name itself has clean slipped through the fingers of my memory." At this the Jolly Doctor glared about the circle as though in wonder at the phenomenon of an interest which remained when the reason of it had faded away.

"I will willingly give you the story," said the Sour Gentleman. "That name you search for is 'The Emperor's Cigars.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

It is not the blood which flows at the front, my friends, that is the worst of war; it is the money corruption that goes on at the rear. In old Sparta, theft was not theft unless discovered in process of accomplishment, and those larcenous morals taught of Lycurgus would seem, on the tails of our own civil war, to have found widest consent and adoption throughout every department of government. The public hour reeled with rottenness, and you may be very sure the New York Customs went as staggeringly corrupt as the rest.

It is to my own proper shame that I should have fallen to have art or part or lot in such iniquities. Yet I went into them with open eyes and hands, and a heart—hungry as a pike's—for whatever of spoil chance or skilfully constructed opportunity might place within my reach. My sole defense, and that now sounds slight and trivial even to my partial ears, was the one I advanced the other day; my two-ply hatred of government both for injuries done my region of the South as well as the personal ruin visited on me when my ill-wishers struck down

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

that enterprise of steamed tobacco which was making me rich. That is all I may urge in extenuation, and I concede its meager insufficiency.

As I've said, I obtained an appointment as an inspector of Customs, and afterward worked side by side, and I might add hand and glove, with our old friends, Quin and Lorns of the Story of the Smuggled Silks. That fearsome honest Chief Inspector who so put my heart to a trot had been dismissed—for some ill-timed integrity, I suppose—sharply in the wake of that day he frightened me; and when I took up life's burdens as an officer of the Customs, my companions, together with myself, were all black sheep together. Was there by any chance an honest man among us, he did not mention it, surely; nor did he lapse into act or deed that might have been evidence to prove him pure. Yes, forsooth! ignorance could be overlooked, drunkenness condoned, indolence reproved; but for that officer of our Customs who in those days was found honest, there shone no ray of hope. He was seized on and cast into outer unofficial darkness, there to exercise his dangerous probity in private life. There was no room for such among us; no peace nor safety for the rest while he remained. Wherefore, we of a proper blackness, were like so many descendants of Diogenes, forever searching among ourselves to find an honest man; but with fell purpose when discovered, of his destruction. We maintained a strictest quarantine against any

THE BLACK LION INN.

infection of truth, and I positively believe, with such success, that it was excluded from our midst. That honest Chief Inspector was dismissed, I say; Lorns told me of it before I'd been actively in place an hour, and the news gave me deepest satisfaction.

That gentleman who was official head of the coterie of revenue hunters to which I was assigned was peculiarly the man unusual. His true name, if I ever heard it, I've forgot; among us of the Customs, he was known as Betelnut Jack. Lorns took me into his presence and made us known to one another early in my revenue career. I had been told stories of this man by both Lorns and Quin. They deeply revered him for his virtues of courage and cunning, and the praises of Betelnut Jack were constant in their mouths.

Betelnut Jack was at his home in the Bowery. Jack, in years gone by, had been a hardy member of one of those Volunteer fire companies which in that hour notably augmented the perils of an urban life. Jack was a doughty fighter, and with a speaking trump in one hand and a spanner-wrench in the other, had done deeds of daring whereof one might still hear the echo. And he became for these strong-hand reasons a tower of strength in politics; and obtained that eminence in the Customs which was his when first we met.

Betelnut Jack received Lorns and myself in his dingy small coop of a parlor. He was unmarried—a popular theory in accounting for this being that

he'd been crossed in love in his youth. Besides the parlor, Jack's establishment contained only one room, a bedroom it was, a shadow larger than the bed.

Betelnut Jack himself was wiry and dark, and with a face which, while showing marks of former wars, shone the seat of kindly good-humor.

There had been an actor, Chanfrau, who played "Mose, the Fireman." Betelnut Jack resembled in dress his Bowery brother of the stage. His soiled silk hat stood on a dresser. He wore a long skirted coat, a red shirt, a belt which upheld—in a manner so absent-minded that one feared for the consequences—his trousers; these latter garments in their terminations were tucked inside the gaudy tops of calfskin boots; small and wrinkleless these, and fitting like a glove, with the yellow seams of the soles each day carefully re-yellowed to the end that they be admired of men. Betelnut Jack's dark hair, a shade of gray streaking it in places, was crisp and wavy; and a long curl, carefully twisted and oiled, was brought down as low as the angle of his jaw just forward of each ear.

"Be honest, young man!" said Betelnut Jack, at the close of a lecture concerning my duties; "be honest! But if you must take wrong money, take enough each time to pay for the loss of your job. Do you see this?" And Jack's hand fell on a large morocco-bound copy of "Josephus" which lay on

THE BLACK LION INN.

his table. "Well, Lorns will tell you what stories I look for in that."

And Lorns, as we came away, told me. Once a week it was the practice of each inspector to split off twenty per cent. of his pillage. He would, thus organized, pay a visit to his chief, the worthy Betelnut Jack. As they gossiped, Jack's ever-ready hospitality would cause him to retire for a moment to the bedroom in search of a demijohn of personal whisky. While alone in the parlor, the visiting inspector would place his contribution between the leaves of "Josephus," and thereby the humiliating, if not dangerous, passage of money from hand to hand was missed.

There existed but one further trait of caretaking forethought belonging with the worthy Betelnut Jack. It would have come better had others of that crooked clique of customs copied Betelnut Jack in this last cautious characteristic. Justice is a tortoise, while rascality's a hare; yet justice though shod with lead wins ever the race at last. Betelnut Jack knew this; and while getting darkly rich with the others, he was always ready for the fall. While his comrades drove fast horses, or builded brown-stone fronts, or affected extravagant opera and supper afterward with those painted lilies, in whose society they delighted, Betelnut Jack clung to his old rude Bowery nest of sticks and straws and mud, and lived on without a change his Bowery life. He suffered no improvements whether of habit or of habitat, and

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

provoked no question-asking by any gilded new prosperities of life.

As fast as Betelnut Jack got money, he bought United States bonds. With each new thousand, he got a new bond, and tucked it safely away among its fellows. These pledges of government he kept packed in a small hand-bag; this stood at his bed's head, ready for instant flight with him. When the downfall did occur, as following sundry years of loot and customs pillage was the desperate case, Betelnut Jack with the earliest whisper of peril, stepped into his raiment and his calfskin boots, took up his satchel of bonds, and with over six hundred thousand dollars of those securities—enough to cushion and make pleasantly sure the balance of his days—saw the last of the Bowery, and was out of the country and into a corner of safety as fast as ship might swim.

But now you grow impatient; you would hear in more of detail concerning what went forward behind the curtains of Customs in those later '60's. For myself, I may tell of no great personal exploits. I did not remain long in revenue service; fear, rather than honesty, forced me to resign; and throughout that brief period of my office holding, youth and a lack of talent for practical iniquity prevented my main employment in those swart transactions which from time to time took place. I was liked, I was trusted; I knew what went forward and in the end I had my share of the ill profits;

THE BLACK LION INN.

but the plans and, usually, the work came from others of a more subtle and experienced venality.

In this affair of The Emperor's Cigars, the story was this. I call them The Emperor's Cigars because they were of a sort and quality made particularly for the then Imperial ruler of the French. They sold at retail for one dollar each, were worth, wholesale, seventy dollars a hundred, and our aggregate harvest of this one operation was, as I now remember, full sixty thousand dollars.

My first knowledge was when Lorns told me one evening of the seizure—by whom of our circle, and on what ship, I've now forgotten—of one hundred thousand cigars. They were in proper boxes, concealed I never knew how, and captured in the very act of being smuggled and just as they came onto our wharf. In designating the seizure, and for reasons which I've given before, they were at once dubbed and ever afterwards known among us as The Emperor's Cigars.

These one hundred thousand cigars were taken to the Customs Depot of confiscated goods. The owners, as was our rule, were frightened with black pictures of coming prison, and then liberated, never to be seen of us again. They were glad enough to win freedom without looking once behind to see what became of their captured property.

It was one week later when a member of our ring, from poorest tobacco and by twenty different makers, caused one hundred thousand cigars, duplicates

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

in size and appearance of those Emperor's Cigars, to be manufactured. These cost two and one-half cents each; a conscious difference, truly! between that and those seventy cents, the wholesale price of our spoil. Well, The Emperor's Cigars were removed from their boxes and their aristocratic places filled by the worthless imitations we had provided. Then the boxes were again securely closed; and to look at them no one would suspect the important changes which had taken place within.

The Emperor's Cigars once out of their two thousand boxes were carefully repacked in certain zinc-lined barrels, and reshipped as "notions" to Havana to one of our folk who went ahead of the consignment to receive them. In due course, and in two thousand proper new boxes they again appeared in the port of New York; this time they paid their honest duty. Also, they had a proper consignment, came to no interrupting griefs; and being quickly disposed of, wrought out for us that sixty thousand dollar betterment of which I've spoken.

As corollary of this particular informality of The Emperor's Cigars, there occurred an incident which while grievous to the victims, made no little fun for us; its relation here may entertain you, and because of its natural connection with the main story, will come properly enough. At set intervals, the government held an auction of all confiscated goods. At these markets to which the public was invited

THE BLACK LION INN.

to appear and bid, the government asserted nothing, guaranteed nothing. In disposing of such gear as these cigars, no box was opened; no goods displayed. One saw nothing but the cover, heard nothing but the surmise of an auctioneer, and thereupon, if impulse urged, bid what he pleased for a pig in a poke.

Thus it came to pass that on the occasion when The Emperor's Cigars were held aloft for bids, the garrulous lecturer employed in selling the collected plunder of three confiscation months, took up one of the two thousand boxes as a sample, and said :

“ I offer for sale a lot of two thousand packages, of which the one I hold in my hand is a specimen. Each package is supposed to contain fifty cigars. What am I bid for the lot? What offer do I hear? ”

That was the complete proffer as made by the government; for all that the bidding was briskly sharp. Those who had come to purchase were there for bargains not guarantees; moreover, there was the box; and could they not believe their experience? Each would-be bidder knew by the size and shape and character of the package that it was made for and should contain fifty cigars of the Emperor brand. Wherefore no one distrusted; the question of contents arose to no mind; and competition grew instant and close. Bid followed bid; five hundred dollars being the mark of each advance, as the noisy

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

struggle between speculators for the lot's ownership proceeded.

At last those celebrated marketeers, Grove and Filtord, received the lot—one hundred thousand of The Emperor's Cigars—for forty-five thousand dollars. What thoughts may have come to them later, when they searched their bargain for its merits, I cannot say. Not one word of inquiry, condemnation or complaint came from Grove and Filtord. Whatever their discoveries, or whatever their deductions, they maintained a profound taciturnity. Probably they did not care to court the laughter of fellow dealers by disclosures of the trap into which they had so blindly bid their way. Surely, they must in its last chapters have been aware of the swindle! To have believed in the genuineness of the goods would have dissipated what remnant of good repute might still have clung to that last of the Napoleons who was their inventor, and justified the coming destruction of his throne and the birth of the republic which arose from its ruins. As I say, however, not one syllable of complaint came floating back from Grove and Filtord. They took their loss, and were dumb.

My own pocket was joyfully gorged with much fat advantage of this iniquity—for inside we were like whalers, each having a prearranged per cent. of what oil was made, no one working for himself alone—long prior to that bidding which so smote on Grove and Filtord. The ring had no money

THE BLACK LION INN.

interest in the confiscation sales; those proceeds went all to government. We divided the profits of our own disposal of the right true Emperor's Cigars on the occasion of their second appearance in port; and that business was ended and over and division done sundry weeks prior to the Grove and Filtord disaster.

That is the story of The Emperor's Cigars; there came still one little incident, however, which was doubtless the seed of those apprehensions which soon drove me to quit the Customs. I had carried his double tithes to Betelnut Jack. This was no more the work of policy than right. The substitution of the bogus wares, the reshipment to Cuba of The Emperor's Cigars, even the zinc-lined barrels, the repackage and second appearance and sale of our prizes, were one and all by direction of Betelnut Jack. He planned the campaign in each least particular. To him was the credit; and to him came the lion's share, as, in good sooth! it should if there be a shadow of that honor among rogues whereof the proverb tells.

On the evening when I sought Betelnut Jack, we sat and chatted briefly of work at the wharfs. Not one word, mind you! escaped from either that might intimate aught of customs immorality. That would have been a gross breach of the etiquette understood by our flock of customs cormorants. No; Betelnut Jack and I confined discussion to transactions absolutely white; no other was so much as hinted at.

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

Then came Betelnut Jack's proposal of his special Willow Run; he retired in quest of the demijohn; this was my cue to enrich "Josephus," ready on the dwarf center table to receive the goods. My present to Betelnut Jack was five one-hundred-dollar bills.

Somewhat in haste, I took these from my pocket and opened "Josephus" to lay them between the pages. Any place would do; Betelnut Jack would know how to discover the rich bookmark. As I parted the book, my eye was arrested by a sentence. As I've asserted heretofore, I'm not superstitious; yet that casual sentence seemed alive and to spring upon me from out "Josephus" as a threat:

"And these men being thieves were destroyed by the King's laws; and their people rended their garments, put on sackcloth, and throwing ashes on their heads went about the streets, crying out."

That is what it said; and somehow it made my heart beat quick and little like a linnet's heart. I put in my contribution and closed the book. But the words clung to me like ivy; I couldn't free myself. In the end, they haunted me to my resignation; and while I remained long enough to share in the affair of the German Girl's Diamonds, and in that of the Filibusterer, when the hand of discovery fell upon Lorns and Quin, and others of my one-time comrades, I was far away, facing innocent, if sometimes dangerous, problems on our western plains.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“With a profound respect for you,” observed the Jolly Doctor to the Sour Gentleman when that raconteur had ended, “and disavowing a least imputation personal to yourself, I must still say that I am amazed by the corruption which your tale discloses of things beyond our Customs doors. To be sure, you speak of years ago; and yet you leave one to wonder if the present be wholly free from taint.”

“It will be remarkable,” returned the Sour Gentleman, “when any arm of government is exerted with entire integrity and no purpose save public good, and every thought of private gain eliminated. The world never has been so virtuous, nor is it like to become so in your time or mine. Government and those offices which, like the works of a watch, are made to constitute it, are the production of politics, and politics, mind you, is nothing save the collected and harmonised selfishness of men. The fruit is seldom better than the tree, and when a source is foul the stream will wear a stain.” Here the Sour Gentleman sighed as though over the baseness of the human race.

“While there’s to be no doubt,” broke in the Red Nosed Gentleman, “concerning the corruption existing in politics and the offices and office holders bred therefrom, I am free to say that I’ve encountered as much blackness, and for myself I have been swindled oftener among merchants plying their reputable commerce of private scales and counters as in the administration of public affairs.”

THE EMPEROR'S CIGARS.

The Red Nosed Gentleman here looked about with a challenging eye as one who would note if his observation is to meet with contradiction. Finding none, he relapsed into silence and burgundy.

“Speakin’ of politics,” said the Old Cattleman, who had listened to the others as though he found their discourse instructive, “it’s the one thing I’ve seen mighty little of. The only occasion on which I finds myse’f immersed in politics is doorin’ the brief sojourn I makes in Missouri, an’ when in common with all right-thinkin’ gents, I whirls in for Old Stewart.”

“Would you mind,” remarked the Jolly Doctor in a manner so amiable it left one no power to resist, “would you mind giving us a glimpse of that memorable campaign in which you bore doubtless no inconsiderable part? We should have time for it, before we retire.”

“Which the part I bears,” responded the Old Cattleman, “wouldn’t amount to the snappin’ of a cap. As to tellin’ you-all concernin’ said outburst of pop’lar enthoosiasm for Old Stewart, I’m plumb willin’ to go as far as you likes.” Drawing his chair a bit closer to the fire and seeing to it that a glass of Scotch was within the radius of his reach, the Old Cattleman began.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

As I states, I saveys nothin' personal of politics. Thar's mighty little politics gets brooited about Wolfville, an' I ain't none shore but it's as well. The camp's most likely a heap peacefuller as a commonity. Shore, Colonel Sterett discusses politics in that Coyote paper he conducts; but none of it's nearer than Washin'ton, an' it all seems so plumb dreamy an' far away that while it's interestin', it can't be regyarded as replete of the harrowin' excitement that sedooes a public from its nacheral rest an' causes it to set up nights an' howl.

Rummagin' my mem'ry, I never does hear any politics talked local but once, an' that's by Dan Boggs. It's when the Colonel asks Dan to what party he adheres in principle—for thar ain't no real shore-enough party lurkin' about in Arizona much, it bein' a territory that a-way an' mighty busy over enterprises more calc'lated to pay—an' Dan retorts that he's hooked up with no outfit none as yet, but stands ready as far as his sentiments is involved to go buttin' into the first organization that'll cheapen nose-paint, 'liminate splits as a resk

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

in faro-bank, an' raise the price of beef. Further than them tenets, Dan allows he ain't got no principles.

Man an' boy I never witnesses any surplus of politics an' party strife. In Tennessee when I'm a child every decent gent has been brought up a Andy Jackson man, an' so continyoos long after that heroic captain is petered. As you-all can imagine, politics onder sech conditions goes all one way like the currents of the Cumberland. Thar's no bicker, no strife, simply a vast Andy Jackson yooniformity.

The few years I puts in about Arkansaw ain't much different. Leastwise we-all don't have issues; an' what contests does arise is gen'rally personal an' of the kind where two gents enjoys a j'int debate with their bowies or shows each other how wrong they be with a gun. An' while politics of the variety I deescribes is thrillin', your caution rather than your intellects gets appealed to, while feuds is more apt to be their frootes than any draw-in' of reg'lar party lines. Wherefore I may say it's only doorin' the one year I abides in Missouri when I experiences troo politics played with issues, candidates, mass-meetin's an' barbecues.

For myse'f, my part is not spectacyoolar, bein' I'm new an' raw an' young; but I looks on with relish, an' while I don't cut no hercoolean figger in the riot, I shore saveys as much about what's

THE BLACK LION INN.

goin' on as the best posted gent between the Ozarks an' the Iowa line.

What you-all might consider as the better element is painted up to beat Old Stewart who's out sloshin' about demandin' re-election to Jeff City for a second term. The better element says Old Stewart drinks. An' this accoosation is doubtless troo a whole lot, for I'm witness myse'f to the following colloquy which takes place between Old Stewart an' a jack-laig doctor he crosses up with in St. Joe. Old Stewart's jest come forth from the tavern, an' bein' on a joobilee the evenin' before, is lookin' an' mighty likely feelin' some seedy.

"Doc," says Old Stewart, openin' his mouth as wide as a young raven, an' then shettin' it ag'in so's to continyoo his remarks, "Doc, I wish you'd peer into this funnel of mine."

Then he opens his mouth ag'in in the same egreegious way, while the scientist addressed scouts about tharin with his eyes, plenty owley. At last the Doc shows symptoms of bein' ready to report.

"Which I don't note nothin' onusual, Gov'nor, about that mouth," says the Doc, "except it's a heap voloominous."

"Don't you discern no signs or signal smokes of any foreign bodies?" says Old Stewart, a bit pettish, same as if he can't onderstand sech blindness.

"None whatever!" observes the Doc.

"It's shore strange," retorts Old Stewart, still in his complainin' tones; "thar's two hundred nig-

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

gers, a brick house an' a thousand acres of bottom land gone down that throat, an' I sort o' reckons some traces of 'em would show."

That's the trouble with Old Stewart from the immacyoolate standpint of the better classes; they says he overdrinks. But while it's convincin' to sooperior folks an' ones who's goin' to church an' makin' a speshulty of it, it don't sep'rate Old Stewart from the warm affections of the rooder masses—the catfish an' quinine aristocracy that dwells along the Missouri; they're out for him to the last sport.

"Suppose the old Gov'nor does drink," says one, "what difference does that make? Now, if he's goin' to try sootes in co't, or assoome the pressure as a preacher, thar'd be something in the bluff. But it don't cut no figger whether a gov'nor is sober or no. All he has to do is pardon convicts an' make notaries public, an' no gent can absorb lickers s'fficient to incapac'tate him for sech trivial dooties."

One of the argyments they uses ag'in Old Stewart is about a hawg-thief he pardons. Old Stewart is headin' up for the state house one mornin', when he caroms on a passel of felons in striped clothes who's pesterin' about the grounds, tittivatin' up the scenery. Old Stewart pauses in front of one of 'em.

"What be you-all in the pen'tentiary for?" says Old Stewart, an' he's profoundly solemn.

Tharupon the felon trails out on a yarn about

THE BLACK LION INN.

how he's a innocent an' oppressed person. He's that honest an' upright—hear him relate the tale—that you'd feel like apol'gizin'. Old Stewart listens to this victim of intrigues an' outrages until he's through; then he goes romancin' along to the next. Thar's five wronged gents in that striped outfit, five who's as free from moral taint or stain of crime as Dave Tutt's infant son, Enright Peets Tutt.

But the sixth is different. He admits he's a miscreant an' has done stole a hawg.

“However did you steal it, you scoundrel?” demands Old Stewart.

“I'm outer meat,” says the crim'nal, “an' a band of pigs comes pirootin' about, an' I nacherally takes my rifle an' downs one.”

“Was it a valyooable hawg?”

“You-all can gamble it ain't no runt,” retorts the crim'nal. “I shore ain't pickin' out the worst, an' I'm as good a jedge of hawgs as ever eats corn pone an' cracklin'.”

At this Old Stewart falls into a foammin' rage an' turns on the two gyards who's soopervisin' the captives.

“Whatever do you-all mean,” he roars, “bringin' this common an' confessed hawg-thief out yere with these five honest men? Don't you know he'll corrupt 'em?”

Tharupon Old Stewart reepairs to his rooms in the state house an' pardons the hawg convict with the utmost fury.

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

“An’ now, pull your freight,” says Old Stewart, to the crim’nal. “If you’re in Jeff City twenty-four hours from now I’ll have you shot at sunrise. The idee of compellin’ five spotless gents to continyoo in daily companionship with a low hawg-thief! I pardons you, not because you merits mercy, but to preserve the morals of our prison.”

The better element concloods they’ll take advantage of Old Stewart’s willin’ness for rum an’ make a example of him before the multitoode. They decides they’ll construct the example at a monstrous meetin’ that’s schedyooled for Hannibal, where Old Stewart an’ his opponent—who stands for the better element mighty excellent, seein’ he’s worth about a million dollars with a home-camp in St. Looney, an’ never a idee above dollars an’ cents—is programmed for one of these yere j’int debates, frequent in the politics of that era. The conspiracy is the more necessary as Old Stewart, mental, is so much swifter than the better element’s candidate, that he goes by him like a antelope. Only two days prior at the town of Fulton, Old Stewart comes after the better element’s candidate an’ gets enough of his hide, oratorical, to make a saddle-cover. The better element, alarmed for their gent, resolves on measures in Hannibal that’s calc’lated to redooce Old Stewart to a shorething. They don’t aim to allow him to wallop their gent at the Hannibal meetin’ like he does in old Callaway. With that, they confides to a trio of Hannibal’s sturdiest sots—all of

THE BLACK LION INN.

'em acquaintances an' pards of Old Stewart—the sacred task of gettin' that statesman too drunk to orate.

This yere Hannibal barbecue, whereat Old Stewart's goin' to hold a open-air discussion with his aristocratic opponent, is set down for one in the afternoon. The three who's to throw Old Stewart with copious libations of strong drink, hunts that earnest person out as early as sun-up at the tavern. They invites him into the bar-room an' bids the bar-keep set forth his nourishment.

Gents, it works like a charm! All the mornin', Old Stewart swings an' rattles with the plotters an' goes drink for drink with 'em, holdin' nothin' back.

For all that the plot falls down. When it's come the hour for Old Stewart to resort to the barbecue an' assoome his share in the exercises, two of the Hannibal delegation is spread out cold an' he'pless in a r'ar room, while Old Stewart is he'pin' the third—a gent of whom he's partic'lar fond—upstairs to Old Stewart's room, where he lays him safe an' serene on the blankets. Then Old Stewart takes another drink by himse'f, an' j'ins his brave adherents at the picnic grounds. Old Stewart is never more loocid, an' ag'in he peels the pelt from the better element's candidate, an' does it with graceful ease.

Old Stewart, however, is regyarded as in peril of defeat. He's mighty weak in the big towns

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

where the better element is entrenched, an' churches grow as thick as blackberries. Even throughout the rooral regions, wherever a meetin' house pokes up its spire, it's onderstood that Old Stewart's in a heap of danger.

It ain't that Old Stewart is sech a apostle of nose-paint neither; it ain't whiskey that's goin' to kill him off at the ballot box. It's the fact that the better element's candidate—besides bein' rich, which is allers a mark of virchoo to a troo believer—is a church member, an' belongs to a congregation where he passes the plate, an' stands high up in the papers. This makes the better element's gent a heap pop'lar with church folk, while pore Old Stewart, who's a hopeless sinner, don't stand no show.

This grows so manifest that even Old Stewart's most locoed supporters concedes that he's gone; an' money is offered at three to one that the better element's entry will go over Old Stewart like a Joone rise over a tow-head. Old Stewart hears these yere misgivin's an' bids his folks be of good cheer.

“I'll fix that,” says Old Stewart. “By election day, my learned opponent will be in sech disrepute with every church in Missouri he won't be able to get clost enough to one of 'em to give it a ripe peach.” Old Stewart onpouches a roll which musters fifteen hundred dollars. “That's mighty little; but it'll do the trick.”

Old Stewart's folks is mystified; they can't make out how he's goin' to round up the congregations

THE BLACK LION INN.

with so slim a workin' cap'tal. But they has faith in their chief; an' his word goes for all they've got. When he lets on he'll have the churches arrayed ag'inst the foe, his warriors takes heart of grace an' jumps into the collar an' pulls like lions refreshed.

It's the fourth Sunday before election when Old Stewart, by speshul an' trusted friends presents five hundred dollars each to a church in St. Looey, an' another in St. Joe, an' still another in Hannibal; said gifts bein' in the name an' with the compliments of his opponent an' that gent's best wishes for the Christian cause.

Thar's not a doubt raised; each church believes itse'f favored five hundred dollars' worth from the kindly hand of the millionaire candidate, an' the three pastors sits pleasantly down an' writes that amazed sport a letter of thanks for his moonificence. He don't onderstand it none; but he decides it's wise to accept this accidental pop'larity, an' he waxes guileful an' writes back an' says that while he don't clearly onderstand, an' no thanks is his doo, he's tickled to hear he's well bethought of by the good Christians of St. Looey, St. Joe an' Hannibal, as expressed in them missives. The better element's candidate congratulates himse'f on his good luck, stands pat, an' accepts his onexpected wreaths. That's jest what Old Stewart, who is as cunnin' as a fox, is aimin' at.

In two days the renown of them five-hundred-dollar gifts goes over the state like a cat over a back

THE GREAT STEWART CAMPAIGN.

roof. In four days every church in the state hears of these largesses. An' bein' plumb alert financial, as churches ever is, each sacred outfit writes on to the better element's candidate an' desires five hundred dollars of that onfortunate publicist. He gets sixty thousand letters in one week an' each calls for five hundred.

Gents, thar's no more to be said; the better element's candidate is up ag'in it. He can't yield to the fiscal demands, an' it's too late to deny the gifts. Whereupon the other churches resents the favoritism he's displayed about the three in St. Looey, St. Joe an' Hannibal. They regyards him as a hoss-thief for not rememberin' them while his weaselskin is in his hand, an' on election day they comes down on him like a pan of milk from a top shelf! You hear me, they shorely blots that onhappy candidate off the face of the earth, an' Old Stewart is Gov'nor ag'in.

On the fourth evening of our companionship about the tavern fire, it was the Red Nosed Gentleman who took the lead with a story.

"You spoke," said the Red Nosed Gentleman, addressing the Jolly Doctor, "of having been told by a friend a story you gave us. Not long ago I was in the audience while an old actor recounted how he once went to the aid of an individual named

THE BLACK LION INN.

Connelly. It was not a bad story, I thought; and if you like, I'll tell it to-night. The gray Thespian called his adventure The Rescue of Connelly, and these were his words as he related it. We were about a table in Browne's chop house when he told it."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

Equipped as we are for the conquest of comfort with fresh pipes, full mugs, and the flavor of a best of suppers still extant within our mouths, it may be an impertinence for one to moralize. And yet, as I go forward to this incident, I will premise that, in every least exigency of life, ill begets ill, while good springs from good and follows the doer with a profit. Such has been my belief; such, indeed, has been my unbroken experience; and the misfortunes of Connelly, and my relief of them, small matters in themselves, are in proof of what I say.

At sixty I look back with envy on that decade which followed my issuing forth from Trinity College, when, hopeless, careless, purposeless beyond the moment, I wandered the face of the earth and fed or starved at the hands of chance-born opportunity. I was up or down or rich or poor, and, with an existence which ran from wine to ditch water and back again to wine, was happy. I recall how in those days of checkered fortune, wherein there came a proportion of one hour of

THE BLACK LION INN.

shadow to one moment of sun, I was wont to think on riches and their possession. I would say to myself: "And should it so befall that I make my millions, I'll have none about me but broken folk: I'll refuse to so much as permit the acquaintance of a rich man." I've been ever deeply controlled by the sentiment therein expressed. Sure it is, I've been incapable of the example of the Levite, and could never keep to the other side of the way when distress appealed.

My youth was wild, and staid folk called it "vicious." I squandered my fortune; melted it, as August melteth ice, while still at Trinity. It was my misfortune to reach my majority before I reached my graduation, and those two college years which ensued after I might legally write myself "man" and the wild days that filled them up, brought me to face the world with no more shillings than might take me to Australia. However, they were gay though graceless times—those college years; and Dublin, from Smock Alley to Sackville Street, may still remember them.

Those ten years after quitting Dublin were years of hit or miss. I did everything but preach or steal. Yes, I even fought three prize-fights; and there were warped, distorted moments when, bloody but victorious, I believed it better to be a fighter than to be a bishop.

But for the main, I drifted to the theaters and lived by the drama. Doubtless I was a wretched

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

actor—albeit I felt myself a Kemble—but the stage was so far good to me it finally brought me—as an underling of much inconsequence—to the fair city of New York. I did but little for the drama, but it did much for me; it led me to America. And now that I've come to New York in this story, I've come to Connelly.

Mayhap I had been in New York three weeks. It was a chill night in April, and I was going down Broadway and thinking on bed; for, having done nothing all day save run about, I was very tired. It was under the lamps at the corner of Twenty-ninth Street, that I first beheld Connelly. Thin of face as of coat, he stood shivering in the keen air. There was something so beaten in the pose of the sorrowful figure that I was brought to a full stop.

As strange to the land and its courtesies as I was to Connelly, I hesitated for a moment to speak. I was loth to be looked upon as one who, from a motive of curiosity, would insult another in bad luck. But I took courage from my virtue and at last made bold to accost him:

“Why do you stand shivering here?” I said.
“Why don't you go home?”

“It's a boarding-house,” said Connelly. “I owe the old lady thirty dollars and if I go back she'll hold me prisoner for it.”

Then he told me his name, and that the trouble with him came from too much rum. Connelly

THE BLACK LION INN.

had a Dublin accent and it won on me; moreover, I also had had troubles traceable to rum.

"Come home," I said; "you can't stand here all night. Come home; I'll go with you and have a talk with the old lady myself. Perhaps I'll find a way to soften her or make her see reason."

"She's incapable of seeing reason," said Connelly; "incapable of seeing anything save money. She understands nothing but gold. She'll hold me captive a week; then if I don't pay, she'll have me arrested. You don't know the 'old lady;' she's a demon unless she's paid."

However, I led Connelly over to Sixth Avenue and restored his optimism with strong drink. Then I bought a quart of whiskey; thus sustained, Connelly summoned courage and together we sought his quarters. In his little room we sat all night, discussing the whiskey and Dublin and Connelly's hard fate.

With the morning I was presented to the "old lady,"—an honor to make one quake. When I reviewed her acrid features, I knew that Connelly was right. Nothing could move that stony heart but money. I put off, therefore, those gallantries and blandishments I might otherwise have introduced, and came at once to the question.

"How much does Connelly owe?"

"Thirty dollars!"

The words were emphasized with a click of teeth that would have done credit to a rat-trap.

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

There was a baleful gleam, too, in the jadestone eye. Clearly, Connelly had read the signs aright. He might regard himself as a prisoner until the "old lady" was paid.

That iron landlady went away to her duties and I counted my fortunes. They assembled but twenty-four dollars—a slim force and not one wherewith to storm the citadel of Connelly's troubles. How should I augment my capital? I knew of but one quick method and that flowed with risks—it was the races.

I turned naturally to the horses, for it was those continuous efforts which I put forth to name winners that had so dissipated my patrimony. About the time I might have selected a victor now and then, my wealth was departed away. It is always thus. Sinister yet satirical paradox! the best judges of racing have ever the least money!

There was no new way open to me, however, in this instance of Connelly. I must pay his debt that day if I would redeem him from this Bastile of a boarding-house, and the races were my single chance. I explained to Connelly; obtained him the consolation of a second quart wherewith to cure the sharper cares of his bondage, and started for the race-course. I knew nothing of American horses and less of American tracks, but I held not back for that. In the transaction of a work of virtue I would trust to lucky stars.

As I approached the race-course gates, my eyes

THE BLACK LION INN.

were pleased with the vision of that excellent pugilist, Joe Coburn. I had known this unworthy in Melbourne; he had graced the ringside on those bustling occasions when I pulled shirt over head and held up my hands for the stakes and the honor of old Ireland. Grown too fat for fisticuffs, Coburn struggled with the races for his daily bread. As he was very wise of horses, and likewise very crooked, I bethought me that Coburn's advice might do me good. If there were a trap set, Coburn should know; and he might aid a former fellow-gladiator to have advantage thereof and show the road to riches.

Are races ever crooked? Man! I whiles wonder at the age's ignorance! Crooked? Indubitably crooked. There was never rascal like your rascal of sport; there's that in the word to disintegrate integrity. I make no doubt it was thus in every time and clime and that even the Olympian games themselves were honeycombed with fraud, and the sacred Altis wherein they were celebrated a mere hotbed of robbery. However, to regather with the doubtful though sapient Coburn.

"Who's to win the first race?" I asked.

"Play Blue Bells!" and Coburn looked at me hard and as one who held mysterious knowledge.

Blue Bells!—I put a cautious five-dollar piece on Blue Bells. I saw her at the start. Vilest of beasts, she never finished—never met my eye

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

again. I asked someone what had become of her. He said that, taking advantage of sundry missing boards over on the back-stretch, Blue Bells had bolted and gone out through the fence. This may have been fact or it may have been sarcasmal fiction; the truth important is, I lost my wager.

Still true to a first impresion—though I confess to confidence a trifle shaken—I again sought Coburn.

“That was a great tip you gave me!” I said. “That suggestion of Blue Bells was a marvel! What do you pick for the next?”

“Get Tambourine!” retorted Coburn. “It’s a sure thing.”

Another five I placed on Tambourine; not without misgivings. But what might I do better? My judgment was worthless where I did not know one horse from another. I might as well take Coburn’s advice; the more since he went often wrong and might name a winner by mistake. Five, therefore, on Tambourine; and when he started my hopes and Connelly—whose consoling quart must be a pint by now—went with him.

At the worst I may so far compliment Tambourine as to say that I saw him again. He finished far in the rear; but at least he had the honesty to go around the course. Yet it was five dollars lost. When Tambourine went back to his stable, my capital was reduced by half, and Connelly and liberty as far apart as when we started.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Following the disaster of Tambourine I sought no more the Coburn. Clearly it was not that philosopher's afternoon for naming winners. Or if it were, he was keeping their names a secret.

Thus ruminating, I sat reading the race card, when of a blinking sudden my eye was caught by the words "Bill Breen." The title seemed a suggestion. Bill Breen had been my roommate—my best friend in the days of old Trinity. I pondered the coincidence.

"If this Bill Breen," I reflected, "is half as fast as my Bill Breen, he's fit to carry Cæsar and his fortunes."

The more I considered, the more I was impressed. It was like sinking in a quicksand. In the end I was caught. I waxed reckless and placed ten dollars—fairly my residue of riches—on Bill Breen in one of those old-fashioned French Mutual pools common of that hour; having done so, I crept away to a lonesome seat in the grandstand and trembled. It was now or never, and Bill Breen would race freighted with the fate of Connelly.

About two seats to my right, and with no one between, sat a round, bloated body of a man. He looked so much like a pig that, had he been put in a sty, you would have had nothing save the fact that he wore a hat to distinguish him from the other inmates. And yet I could tell by the mien of him, and his airs of lofty isolation and

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

superiority, that he knew all about a horse—knew so much more than common folk that he despised them and withdrew from their society. It was like tempting the skies to speak to him, so wrapped was he in the dignity of his vast knowledge, but my quaking solicitude over Bill Breen and the awful stakes he ran for in poor Connelly's evil case, emboldened me. With a look, deprecatory at once and apologetic, I turned to this oracle:

"Do you know a horse named Bill Breen?" I asked.

"I do," he replied coldly. Then ungrammatically: "That's him walking down the track to the scales for the 'jock' to weigh in," and he pointed to a greyhound-shaped chestnut.

"Can he race?" I said, with a gingerly air of merest curiosity.

"He can race, but he won't," and the swinish man twined the huge gold chain about his right fore-hoof. "I lost fifty dollars on him Choosday. The horse can race, but he won't; he's crazy."

"He looks well," I observed timidly.

"Sure! he looks well," assented the swinish one; "but never mind his looks; he won't win."

Then came the start and the horses got away on the first trial. They went off in a bunch, and it gave me some color of satisfaction to note Bill Breen well to the front.

"He has a good start," I ventured.

"Hang the start!" derided the swinish one.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“He won’t win, I tell you; he’ll go and jump over the fence and never come back.”

As the horses went from the quarter to the half mile post, Bill Breen, running easily, was strongly in the lead and increasing. My blood began to tingle.

“He’s ahead at the half mile.”

“And what of it?” retorted the swinish one, disgustedly. “Now keep your eye on him. In ten seconds he’ll fly up in the air and stay there. He won’t win; the horse is crazy.”

As the field swung into the homestretch and each jockey picked his route for the run to the wire, Bill Breen was going like a bird, twenty yards to the good if a foot. The swinish one placed the heavy member that had been caressing the watch-chain on my shoulder. He did not wait for any comment from me.

“Sit still,” he howled; “sit still. He won’t win. If he can’t lose any other way, he’ll stop back beyant on the stretch and bite the boy off his back. That’s what he’ll do; he’ll bite the jockey off his back.”

To this last assurance, delivered with a roar, I made no answer. The horses were coming like a whirlwind; riders lashing, nostrils straining. The roll of the hoofs put my heart to a sympathetic gallop. I could not have said a word if I had tried. With the grandstand in a tumult, the

THE RESCUE OF CONNELLY.

horses flashed under the wire, Bill Breen winner with a flourish by a dozen lengths.

Connelly was saved.

As the horses were being dismissed, and "Bill Breen" was hung from the judges' stand as "first," the swinish one contemplated me gravely and in silence.

"Have you a ticket on him?"

"I have," I replied.

"Then you'll win a million dollars." This with a toss as he arose to go. "You'll win a million dollars. You're the only fool who has."

It's like the stories you read. The swinish one was so nearly correct in his last remark that I found but two tickets besides my own on Bill Breen. It has the ring of fable, but I was richer by eleven hundred and thirty-two dollars when that race was over. Blue Bells and Tambourine were forgotten; Bill Breen had redeemed the day! It was pleasant when I had cashed my ticket to observe me go about recovering the lost Connelly.

"Now, there," cried the Jolly Doctor, "there is a story which tells of a joy your rich man never knows—the joy of being rescued from a money difficulty."

"And do you think a rich man is for that unlucky?" asked the Sour Gentleman.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Verily, do I,” returned the Jolly Doctor, earnestly. “I can conceive of nothing more dreary than endless riches—the wealth that is by the cradle—that from birth to death is as easy to one’s hand as water. How should he know the sweet who has not known the bitter? Man! the thorn is ever the charm of the rose.”

It was discovered in the chat which followed the Red Nosed Gentleman’s tale that Sioux Sam might properly be regarded as the one who should next take up the burden of the company’s entertainment. It stood a gratifying characteristic of our comrade from the Yellowstone that he was not once found to dispute the common wish. He never proffered a story; but he promptly told one when asked to do so. He was taciturn, but he was no less ready for that, and the moment his name was called he proceeded with the fable of “Moh-Kwa and the Three Gifts.”

CHAPTER XIX.

MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

This is in the long time ago when the sun is younger an' not so big an' hot as now, an' Kwa-Sind, the Strong Man, is a chief of the Upper Yellowstone Sioux. It is on a day in the Moon-of-the-first-frost an' Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, is gathering black-berries an' filling his mouth. As Moh-Kwa pulls the bush towards him, he pierces his paw with a great thorn so that it makes him howl an' shout, for much is his rage an' pain. Moh-Kwa cannot get the great thorn out; because Moh-Kwa's claws while sharp an' strong are not fingers to pull out a thorn; an' the more Moh-Kwa bites his paw to get at the thorn, the further he pushes it in. At last Moh-Kwa sits growling an' looking at the thorn an' wondering what he is to do.

While Moh-Kwa is wondering an' growling, there comes walking Shaw-shaw, the Swallow, who is a young man of the Sioux. The Swallow has a good heart; but his spirit is light an' his nature as easily blown about on each new wind as a dead leaf. So the Sioux have no respect for the

THE BLACK LION INN.

Swallow but laugh when he comes among them, an' some even call him Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward, for they do not look close, an' mistake lightness for fear.

When the Swallow came near, Moh-Kwa, still growling, held forth his paw an' showed the Swallow how the thorn was buried in the big pad so that he could not bite it out an' only made it go deeper. An' with that the Swallow, who had a good heart, took Moh-Kwa's big paw between his knees an' pulled out the great thorn; for the Swallow had fingers an' not claws like Moh-Kwa, an' the Swallow's fingers were deft an' nimble to do any desired deed.

When Moh-Kwa felt the relief of that great thorn out of his paw, he was grateful to the Swallow an' thought to do him a favor.

"You are laughed at," said Moh-Kwa to the Swallow, "because your spirit is light as dead leaves an' too much blown about like a tumbleweed wasting its seeds in foolish travelings to go nowhere for no purpose so that only it goes. Your heart is good, but your work is of no consequence, an' your name will win no respect; an' with years you will be hated since you will do no great deeds. Already men call you Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward. I am Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear of the Yellowstone, an' I would do you a favor for taking my paw an' the thorn apart. But I cannot change your nature; only Pau-guk,



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CALIFORNIA.

KWA-SIND.

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MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

the Death, can do that; an' no man may touch Pau-guk an' live. Yet for a favor I will give you three gifts, which if you keep safe will make you rich an' strong an' happy; an' all men will love you an' no longer think to call you Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward."

Moh-Kwa when he had ended this long talk, licked his paw where had been the great thorn, an' now that the smart was gone an' he could put his foot to the ground an' not howl, he took the Swallow an' carried him to his house in the rocks. An' Moh-Kwa gave the Swallow a knife, a necklace of bear-claws, an' a buffalo robe.

"While you carry the knife," said Moh-Kwa, "all men will respect an' fear you an' the squaws will cherish you in their hearts. While you wear the bear-claws, you will be brave an' strong, an' whatever you want you will get. As for the skin of the buffalo, it is big medicine, an' if you sit upon it an' wish, it will carry you wherever you ask to go."

Besides the knife, the bear-claws an' the big medicine robe, Moh-Kwa gave the Swallow the thorn he had pulled from his foot, telling him to sew it in his moccasin, an' when he was in trouble it would bring Moh-Kwa to him to be a help. Also, Moh-Kwa warned the Swallow to beware of a cunning squaw.

"For," said Moh-Kwa, "your nature is light

THE BLACK LION INN.

like dead leaves, an' such as you seek ever to be a fool about a cunning squaw."

When the Swallow came again among the Sioux he wore the knife an' the bear-claws that Moh-Kwa had given him; an' in his lodge he spread the big medicine robe. An' because of the knife an' the bear-claws, the warriors respected an' feared him, an' the squaws loved him in their hearts an' followed where he went with their eyes. Also, when he wanted anything, the Swallow ever got it; an' as he was swift an' ready to want things, the Swallow grew quickly rich among the Sioux, an' his lodge was full of robes an' furs an' weapons an' new dresses of skins an' feathers, while more than fifty ponies ate the grass about it.

Now, this made Kwa-Sind, the Strong Man, angry in his soul's soul; for Kwa-Sind was a mighty Sioux, an' had killed a Pawnee for each of his fingers, an' a Blackfoot an' a Crow for each of his toes, an' it made his breast sore to see the Swallow, who had been also called Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward, thought higher among the Sioux an' be a richer man than himself. Yet Kwa-Sind was afraid to kill the Swallow lest the Sioux who now sung the Swallow's praises should rise against him for revenge.

Kwa-Sind told his hate to Wah-bee-noh, who was a medicine man an' juggler, an' agreed that he would give Wah-bee-noh twenty ponies to make the Swallow again as he was so that the

MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

Sioux would laugh at him an' call him Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward.

Wah-bee-noh, the medicine man, was glad to hear the offer of Kwa-Sind, for he was a miser an' thought only how he might add another pony to his herd. Wah-bee-noh told Kwa-Sind he would surely do as he asked, an' that the Swallow within three moons would be despised among all the Sioux.

Wah-bee-noh went to his lodge an' made his strongest medicine an' called Jee-bi, the Spirit. An' Jee-bi, the Spirit, told Wah-bee-noh of the Swallow's knife an' bear-claws an' the medicine robe.

An' now Wah-bee-noh made a plan an' gave it to his daughter who was called Oh-pee-chee, the Robin, to carry out; for the Robin was full of craft an' cunning, an' moreover, beautiful among the young girls of the Sioux.

The Robin dressed herself until she was like the red bird; an' then she walked up an' down in front of the lodge of the Swallow. An' when the Swallow saw her, his nature which was light as dead leaves at once became drawn to the Robin, an' the Swallow laughed an' made a place by his side for the Robin to sit down. With that the Robin came an' sat by his side; an' after a little she sang to him Ewah-yeah, the Sleep-song, an' the Swallow was overcome; his eyes closed

THE BLACK LION INN.

an' slumber settled down upon him like a night-fog.

Then the Robin stole the knife from its sheath an' the bear-claws from about the neck of the Swallow; but the medicine robe the Robin could not get because the Swallow was asleep upon it, an' if she pulled it from beneath him he would wake up.

The Robin took the knife an' the bear-claws an' carried them to Wah-bee-noh, her father, who got twelve ponies from Kwa-Sind for them an' added the ponies to his herd. An' the heart of Wah-bee-noh danced the miser's dance of gain in his bosom from mere gladness; an' because he would have eight more ponies from Kwa-Sind, he sent the Robin back to steal the medicine robe when the Swallow should wake up.

The Robin went back, an' finding the Swallow still asleep on the medicine robe, lay down by his side; an' soon she too fell asleep, for the Robin was a very tired squaw since to be cunning an' full of craft is hard work an' soon wearies one.

When the Swallow woke up he missed his knife an' bear-claws. Also, he remembered that Moh-Kwa had warned him for the lightness of his spirit to beware of a cunning squaw. When these thoughts came to the Swallow, an' seeing the Robin still sleeping by his side, he knew well that she had stolen his knife an' bear-claws.

Now, the Swallow fell into a great anger an'

MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

thought an' thought what he should do to make the Robin return the knife an' bear-claws she had stolen. Without them the Sioux would laugh at him an' despise him as before, an' many would again call him Shau-goh-dah-wah, the Coward, an' the name bit into the Swallow's heart like a rattlesnake an' poisoned it with much grief.

While the Swallow thought an' the Robin still lay sleeping, a plan came to him; an' with that, the Swallow seeing he was with the Robin lying on the medicine robe, sat up an' wished that both himself an' the Robin were in a far land of rocks an' sand where a great pack of wolves lived.

Like the flash an' the flight of an arrow, the Swallow with the Robin still asleep by his side, an' with the medicine robe still beneath them on the ground, found himself in a desolate land of rocks an' sands, an' all about him came a band of wolves who yelped an' showed their teeth with the hunger that gnawed their flanks.

Because the wolves yelped, the Robin waked up; an' when she saw their white teeth shining with hunger she fell down from a big fear an' cried an' twisted one hand with the other, thinking Pau-guk, the Death, was on his way to get her. The Robin wept an' turned to the Swallow an' begged him to put her back before the lodge of Wah-bee-noh, her father.

But the Swallow, with the anger of him who is robbed, spoke hard words out of his mouth.

THE BLACK LION INN.

“Give me back the knife an’ the bear-claws you have stolen. You are a bad squaw, full of cunning an’ very crafty; but here I shall keep you an’ feed you—legs an’ arms an’ head an’ body—to my wolf-friends who yelp an’ show their teeth out yonder, unless I have my knife an’ bear-claws again.”

This brought more fear on the Robin, an’ she felt that the Swallow’s words were as a shout for Pau-guk, the Death, to make haste an’ claim her; yet her cunning was not stampeded but stood firm in her heart.

The Robin said that the Swallow must give her time to grow calm an’ then she would find the knife an’ bear-claws for him. While the Swallow waited, the Robin still wept an’ sobbed for fear of the white teeth of the wolves who stood in a circle about them. But little by little, the crafty Robin turned her sobs softly into Ewah-yeah, the Sleep-song; an’ soon slumber again tied the hands an’ feet an’ stole the eyes of the Swallow.

Now the Robin did not hesitate. She tore the big medicine robe from beneath the Swallow; throwing herself into its folds, the Robin wished herself again before Wah-bee-noh’s lodge, an’ with that the robe rushed with her away across the skies like the swoop of a hawk. The Swallow was only awake in time to see the Robin go out of sight like a bee hunting its hive.

Now the Swallow was so cast down with shame

MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

that he thought he would call Pau-guk, the Death, an' give himself to the wolves who sat watching with their hungry eyes. But soon his heart came back, an' his spirit which was light as dead leaves, stirred about hopefully in his bosom.

While he considered what he should now do, helpless an' hungry, in this desolate stretch of rocks an' sand an' no water, the thorn which had been in Moh-Kwa's paw pricked his foot where it lay sewed in his moccasin. With that the Swallow wished he might only see the Wise Bear to tell him his troubles.

As the Swallow made this wish, an' as if to answer it, he saw Moh-Kwa coming across the rocks an' the sand. When the wolves saw Moh-Kwa, they gave a last howl an' ran for their hiding places.

Moh-Kwa himself said nothing when he came up, an' the Swallow spoke not for shame but lay quiet while Moh-Kwa took him by the belt which was about his middle an' throwing him over his shoulder as if the Swallow were a dead deer, galloped off like the wind for his own house.

When Moh-Kwa had reached his house, he gave the Swallow a piece of buffalo meat to eat. Then Moh-Kwa said:

"Because you would be a fool over a beautiful squaw who was cunning, you have lost my three gifts that were your fortune an' good fame. Still, because you were only a fool, I will get them

THE BLACK LION INN.

back for you. You must stay here, for you cannot help since your spirit is as light as dead leaves, an' would not be steady for so long a trail an' one which calls for so much care to follow."

Then Moh-Kwa went to the door of his house an' called his three friends, Sug-gee-mah, the Mosquito, Sub-bee-kah-shee, the Spider, an' Wah-wah-tah-see, the Firefly; an' to these he said:

"Because you are great warriors an' fear nothing in your hearts I have called you."

An' at that, Wah-wah-tah-see, an' Sub-bee-kah-shee, an' Sug-gee-mah stood very straight an' high, for being little men it made them proud because so big a bear as Moh-Kwa had called them to be his help.

"To you, Sub-bee-kah-shee," said Moh-Kwa, turning to the Spider, "I leave Kwa-Sind; to you, Wah-wah-tah-see, the Firefly, falls the honor of slaying Wah-bee-noh, the bad medicine man; while unto you, Sug-gee-mah descends the hardest task, for you must fight a great battle with Nee-pah-win, the Sleep."

Moh-Kwa gave his orders to his three friends; an' with that Sub-bee-kah-shee, crept to the side of Kwa-Sind where he slept an' bit him on the cheek; an' Kwa-Sind turned first gray an' then black with the spider's venom, an' then died in the hands of Pau-guk, the Death, who had followed the Spider to Kwa-Sind's lodge.



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THE MEDICINE MAN.

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MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

While this was going forward, Wah-wah-tah-see, the Firefly, came as swift as wing could carry to the lodge where Wah-bee-noh was asleep rolled up in a bear-skin. Wah-bee-noh was happy, for with the big medicine robe which the Robin had brought him, he already had bought the eight further ponies from Kwa-Sind an' they then grazed in Wah-bee-noh's herd. As Wah-bee-noh laughed in his sleep because he dreamed of the twenty ponies he had earned from Kwa-Sind, the Firefly stooped an' stung him inside his mouth. An' so perished Wah-bee-noh in a flame of fever, for the poison of Wah-wah-tah-see, the Firefly, burns one to death like live coals.

Sug-gee-mah, the Mosquito, found Nee-pah-win, the Sleep, holding the Robin fast. But Sug-gee-mah was stout, an' he stooped an' stung the Sleep so hard he let go of the Robin an' stood up to fight.

All night an' all day an' all night, an' yet many days an' nights, did Sug-gee-mah, the 'bold Mosquito, an' Nee-pah-win, the Sleep, fight for the Robin. An' whenever Nee-pah-win, the Sleep, would take the Robin in his arms, 'Sug-gee-mah, the Mosquito, would strike him with his little lance. For many days an' nights did Sug-gee-mah, the Mosquito, hold Nee-pah-win, the Sleep, at bay; an' in the end the Robin turned wild an' crazy, for unless Nee-pah-win, the Sleep, takes each man an' woman in his arms when the sun

THE BLACK LION INN.

goes down it is as if they were bitten by the evil polecats who are rabid; an' the men an' women who are not held in the arms of Nee-pah-win go mad an' rave like starved wolves till they die. An' thus it was with the Robin. After many days an' nights, Pau-guk, the Death, came for her also, an' those three who had done evil to the Swallow were punished.

Moh-Kwa, collecting the knife, the bear-claws an' the big medicine robe from the lodge of Kwa-Sind, gave them to the Swallow again. This time the Swallow stood better guard, an' no squaw, however cunning, might make a fool of him—though many tried—so he kept his knife, the bear-claws, an' the big medicine robe these many years while he lived.

As for Sub-bee-kah-shee, the Spider, an' Wah-wah-tah-see, the Firefly, an' Sug-gee-mah, the brave Mosquito, Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, for a reward gave them an' their countless squaws an' papooses forever that fine swamp where Apuk-wah, the Bulrush, grows thick an' green, an' makes a best hunting grounds for the three little warriors who killed Kwa-Sind, Wah-bee-noh, an' the Robin on that day when Moh-Kwa called them his enemies. An' now when every man was at peace an' happy, Moh-Kwa brought the Sioux together an' re-named the Swallow "Thorn-Puller;" an' by that name was he known till he died.

MOH-KWA AND THE THREE GIFTS.

“How many are there of these Sioux folk-lore tales?” asked the Jolly Doctor of Sioux Sam.

“How many leaves in June?” asked Sioux Sam. “If our Great Medicine”—so he called the Jolly Doctor—“were with the Dakotahs, the old men an’ the squaws would tell him a fresh one for every fresh hour of his life. There is no end.”

While the Jolly Doctor was reflecting on this reply, the Red Nosed Gentleman, raising his glass of burgundy to the Sour Gentleman who returned the compliment in whiskey, said:

“My respects to you, sir; and may we hope you will now give us that adventure of The German Girl’s Diamonds?”

“I shall have the utmost pleasure,” responded the Sour Gentleman. “You may not consider it of mighty value as a story, but perhaps as a chapter in former Custom’s iniquity one may concede it a use.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

It cannot be said, my friends, that I liked my position in that sink of evil, the New York Customs. I was on good terms with my comrades, but I founded no friendships among them. It has been and still is a belief of mine, and one formed at an early age, that everybody wears suggestive resemblance to some bird or fish or beast. I've seen a human serpent's face, triangular, poisonous, menacing with ophidian eyes; I've seen a dove's face, soft, gentle, harmless, and with lips that cooed as they framed and uttered words. And there are faces to remind one of dogs, of sheep, of apes, of swine, of eagles, of pike—ravenous, wide-mouthed, swift. I've even encountered a bear's face on Broadway—one full of a window-peering curiosity, yet showing a contented, sluggish sagacity withal. And every face about me in the Customs would carry out my theory. As I glanced from Lorns to Quin, and from Quin to another, and so to the last upon the list, I beheld reflected as in a glass, a hawk, or an owl, or a wolf, or a fox, or a ferret, or even

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

a cat. But each rapacious; each stamped with the instinct of predation as though the word "Wolf" were written across his forehead. Even Betelnut Jack gave one the impression that belongs with some old, rusty black-eagle with worn and tumbled plumage. I took no joy of my comrades; saw no more of them than I might; despised my trade of land-pirate—for what better could it be called?—and following that warning from "Josephus" was ever haunted of a weird fear of what might come. Still, I remained and claimed my loot with the rest. And you ask why? When all is said, I was as voracious as the others; I clinked the coins in my pocket, and consoled myself against the foul character of such profits with that thought of Vespasian: "The smell of all money is sweet."

Following my downfall of tobacco, I had given up my rich apartments in Twenty-second Street; and while I retained my membership, I went no more to the two or three clubs into which I'd been received. In truth, these Custom House days I seldom strolled as far northward as Twenty-third Street; but taking a couple of moderate rooms to the south of Washington Square, I stuck to them or to the park in front as much as ever I might; passing a lonely life and meeting none I'd known before.

One sun-filled September afternoon, being free at that hour, I was occupying a bench in Wash-

THE BLACK LION INN.

ington Square, amusing my idleness with the shadows chequered across the walk by an over-spreading tree. A sound caught my ear; I looked up to be mildly amazed by the appearance of Betelnut Jack. It was seldom my chief was found so far from his eyrie in the Bowery; evidently he was seeking me. His first words averred as much.

“I was over to your rooms,” remarked Betelnut Jack; “they told me you were here.”

Then he gave me a pure Havana—for we of the Customs might smoke what cigars we would—lighted another and betook himself to a few moments of fragrant, wordless tranquility. I was aware, of course, that Betelnut Jack had a purpose in coming; but curiosity was never among my vices, and I did not ask his mission. With a feeling of indifference, I awaited its development in his own good way and time.

Betelnut Jack was more apt to listen than talk; but upon this Washington Square afternoon, he so far departed those habits of taciturnity commonly his own as to furnish the weight of conversation. He did not hurry to his business, but rambled among a score of topics. He even described to me by what accident he arrived at his by-name of Betelnut Jack. He said he was a sailor in his youth. Then he related how he went on deep water ships to India and to the China seas; how he learned to chew betel from the Ori-

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

entals; how after he came ashore he was still addicted to betel; how a physician, ignorant of betel and its crimson consequences, fell into vast excitement over what he conceived to be a perilous hemorrhage; and how before Jack could explain, seized on him and hurried him into a near-by drug shop. When he understood his mistake, the physician took it in dudgeon, and was inclined to blame Jack for those sanguinary yet fraudulent symptoms. One result of the adventure was to re-christen him "Betelnut Jack," the name still sticking, albeit he had for long abandoned betel as a taste outgrown.

Betelnut Jack continued touching his career in New York; always with caution, however, slurring some parts and jumping others; from which I argued that portions of my chief's story were made better by not being divulged. It occurred, too, as a deduction drawn from his confidences that Betelnut Jack had been valorous as a Know-Nothing; and he spoke with rapture of the great prize-fighter, Tom Hyer, who beat Yankee Sullivan; and then of the fistic virtues of the brave Bill Poole, coming near to tears as he set forth the latter's murder in Stanwix Hall.

Also, I gathered that Betelnut Jack had been no laggard at hurling stones and smashing windows in the Astor Place riot of 1849.

"And the soldiers killed one hundred and thirty-four," sighed Betelnut Jack, when de-

THE BLACK LION INN.

scribing the battle; "and wounded four times as many more. And all, mind you! for a no-good English actor with an Irish name!" This last in accents of profound disgust.

In the end Betelnut Jack began to wax uneasy; it was apparent how he yearned for his nest in the familiar Bowery. With that he came bluntly to the purpose.

"To-morrow, early," he said, "take one of the women inspectors and go down to quarantine. Some time in the course of the day, the steamship 'Wolfgang,' from Bremen, will arrive. Go aboard at once. In the second cabin you will find a tall, gray, old German; thin, with longish hair. He may have on dark goggles; if he hasn't, you will observe that he is blind of the right eye. His daughter, a girl of twenty-three, will be with him. Her hair will be done up in that heavy roll which hair-dressers call the 'waterfall,' and hang in a silk close-meshed net low on her neck. Hidden in the girl's hair are diamonds of a Berlin value of over one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. You will search the old man, and have the woman inspector search the girl. Don't conduct yourselves as though you knew what you were looking for. Tell your assistant to find the girl's diamonds naturally; let her work to them by degrees, not swoop on them."

Then Betelnut Jack disposed himself for home-

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

ward flight. I asked how he became aware of the jewels and the place of their concealment.

“Never mind that now,” was his reply; “you’ll know later. But get the diamonds; they’re there and you must not fail. I’ve come for you, as you’re more capable of doing the gentleman than some of the others, and this is a case where a dash of refinement won’t hurt the trick.”

With that Betelnut Jack lounged over to Fourth Street and disappeared towards Broadway and the Bowery further east.

Following my chief’s departure, I continued in idle contemplation of the shadows. This occupation did not forbid a mental looking up and down of what would be my next day’s work. The prospect was far from refreshing. When one is under thirty, a proposal to plunder a girl—a beautiful girl, doubtless—of her diamonds, does not appeal to one. There would be woe, tears, lamentations, misery with much wringing of hands. I began to call myself a villain.

Then, as against her, and defensive of myself, I argued the outlaw character of the girl’s work. Be she beautiful or be she favored ill, still she is breaking the law. It was our oath to seize the gems; whatever of later wrong was acted, at best or worst, it was no wrong done her. In truth! when she was at last left free and at liberty, she would be favored beyond her deserts; for those

THE BLACK LION INN.

Customs laws which she was cheating spoke of grates and keys and bars and bolts.

In this wise, and as much as might be, I comforted myself against the disgrace of an enterprise from which I naturally recoiled, hardening myself as to the poor girl marked to be our prey. I confess I gained no great success; say what I might, I contemned myself.

While thus ruminating that dishonor into which I conceived myself to have fallen, I recalled a story written by Edgar Allen Poe. It is a sketch wherein a wicked man is ever followed and thwarted by one who lives his exact semblance in each line of face and form. This doppel-ganger, as the Germans name him, while the same with himself in appearance and dress, is his precise opposite in moral nature. This struggle between the haunted one and his weird, begins in boyhood and continues till middle age. At the last, frantic under a final opposition, the haunted one draws sword and slays his enemy. Too late, as he wipes the blood from his blade, he finds that he has killed his better self; too late he sees that from that time to the end, the present will have no hope, the future hold no heaven; that he must sink and sink and sink, until he is grasped by those hands outstretched of hell to forever have him for their horrid own. I wondered if I were not like that man unhappy; I asked if I did not, by these various defenses and apologies which I made ever for

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

my wickedness, work towards the death of my better nature whose destruction when it did come would mean the departure forever of my soul's chance.

I stood up and shook myself in a canine way. Decidedly, loneliness was making me morbid! However that may have been, I passed a far from happy afternoon.

Fairly speaking, these contentions shook me somewhat in my resolves. There were moments when I determined to refuse my diamond-hunting commission and resign my place. I even settled the style of my resignation; it should be full of sarcasm.

But alas! these white dreams faded; in the end I was ready to execute the orders of Betelnut Jack; and that which decided me was surely the weakest thought of all. Somehow, I had in my thoughts put down the coming German maiden as beautiful; Betelnut Jack had said her age was twenty-three, which helped me to this thought of girlish loveliness. Thus, my imaginings worked in favor of the girl.

But next the thought fell blackly that she would some day—probably a near day—love some man unknown and marry him. Possibly this lover she already knew; perhaps he was here and she on her way to meet him! This will sound like jest; it will earn derision from healthful, balanced spirits; and yet I tell but the truth.

THE BLACK LION INN.

I experienced a vague, resentful jealousy, hated this imagined lover of a girl I'd never met, and waxed contemptuous of aught of leniency towards one or both. I would do as Betelnut Jack ordered; I would go down to quarantine on the morrow; and I would find the diamonds.

It was late in the afternoon when with a woman assistant, I boarded the "Wolfgang" in the Narrows. My aged German was readily picked up; his daughter was with him. And her beauty was as I'd painted on the canvas of my thoughts. Yet when I beheld the loveliness which should have melted me, I recalled that lover to whose arms she might be coming and was hardened beyond recall. I told the inspectress to take her into her private room and find the diamonds. With that, I turned my back and strolled to the forward deck. Even at that distance I heard the shriek of the girl when her treasure was discovered.

"There will be less for the lover!" I thought.

When my woman assistant—accomplice might be the truer term—joined me, she had the jewels. They were in a long eel-skin receptacle, sewed tightly, and had been secreted in the girl's hair as described by Betelnut Jack. I took the gems, and buttoning them in my coat, told my aide—who with a feminine fashion of bitterness seemed exultant over having deprived another of her gew-gaws—to arrest the girl, hold her until the

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

boat docked, frighten her with tales of fetters and dungeons and clanging bars, and at the last to lose her on the wharf. It would be nine o'clock of the night by then, and murk dark; this loss of her prisoner would seem to come honestly about.

If I were making a romance, rather than bending to a relation of cold, gray, hard, untender facts, I would at this crisis defy Betelnut Jack, rescue the beautiful girl, restore her jewels, love her, win her, wed her, and with her true, dear arms about me, live happy ever after. As it was, however, I did nothing of that good sort. My aide obeyed directions in a mood at once thorough, blithe, and spiteful, and never more did I set eyes on the half-blind father or the tearful, pretty, poor victim of our diamond hunting. Lost in the crush and bustle of the wharf, they were never found, never looked for, and never rendered themselves.

I had considered what profit from these jewels might accrue to the ring and the means by which it would be arrived at. I took it for granted that some substitutional arts—when paste would take the places of old mine gems—would be resorted to as in the excellent instance of *The Emperor's Cigars*. But Betelnut Jack shook his careful head; there would be no hokus-pokus of substitution; there were good reasons. Also, there was another way secure. If our profits were somewhat shaved, our safety would be aug-

THE BLACK LION INN.

mented; and Betelnut Jack's watchword was "Safety first!" I was bound to acquiesce; I the more readily did so since, like Lorns and Quin, I had grown to perfect confidence in the plans of Betelnut Jack. However, when now I had brushed aside etiquette and broken the ice of the matter with my chief, I asked how he meant to manœuvre in the affair.

"Wait!" retorted Betelnut Jack, and that was the utmost he would say.

In due time came the usual auction and the gems were sold. They were snapped up by a syndicate of wise folk of Maiden Lane who paid therefor into the hands of the government the even sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

Still I saw not how our ring would have advantage; no way could open for us to handle those one hundred thousand dollars in whole or in part. I was in error; a condition whereof I was soon to be made pleasantly aware.

On the day following the sale, and while the price paid still slept unbanked in the Customs boxes of proof-steel, there came one to see our canny chief. It is useless to waste description on this man. Suffice it that he was in fact and in appearance as skulkingly the coward scoundrel as might anywhere be met. This creeping creature was shown into the private rooms of Betelnut Jack. A moment later, I was sent for.

Betelnut Jack was occupying a chair; he wore

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

an air of easy confidence; and over that, a sentiment of contempt for his visitor. This latter was posed in the middle of the room; and while an apprehension of impending evil showed on his face, he made cringing and deprecatory gestures with shoulders hunched and palms turned outward.

"Sit down," observed Betelnut Jack, pushing a chair towards me. When I was seated, he spoke on. "Since it was you who found the diamonds, I thought it right to have you present now. You asked me once how I knew in advance of those gems and their scheme of concealment. To-day you may learn. This is the gentleman who gave me the information. He did it to obtain the reward—to receive that great per cent. of the seizure's proceeds which is promised the informer by the law. His information was right; he is entitled to the reward. That is what he is here for; he has come to be paid." Then to the hangdog, cringing one: "Pretty good day's work for you, eh? Over fifty thousand dollars for a little piece of information is stiff pay!" The hangdog one bowed lower and a smirk of partial confidence began to broaden his face. "And now you've come for your money—fifty odd thousand!"

"If you please, sir! yes, sir!" More and wider smirks.

"All right!" retorted Betelnut Jack. "You

THE BLACK LION INN.

shall have it, friend; but not now—not to-day.”

“Then when?” and the smirk fled.

“To-morrow,” said Betelnut Jack. “To-morrow, next day, any day in fact when you bring before me to be witnesses of the transaction the father, the sister, and your wife.”

Across the face of the hangdog one spread a pallor that was as the whiteness of death. There burned the fires of a hot agony in his eyes as though a dirk had slowly pierced him. His voice fell in a husky whisper.

“You would cheat me!”

“No; I would do you perfect justice,” replied Betelnut Jack. “Not a splinter do you finger until you bring your people. Your wife and her sister and their father shall know this story, and stand here while the money is paid. Not a stiver else! Now, go!”

Betelnut Jack’s tones were as remorseless as a storm; they offered nothing to hope; the hangdog one heard and crept away with a look on his face that was but ill to see. Once the door was closed behind him, Betelnut Jack turned with a cheerful gleam to me.

“That ends him! It’s as you guess. This informer is the son-in-law of the old German. He married the elder daughter. They came over four years ago and live in Hoboken. Then the father and the younger sister were to come. They put their whole fortune into the diamonds,

THE GERMAN GIRL'S DIAMONDS.

aiming to cheat the Customs and manage a profit; and the girl wrote their plans and how they would hide the jewels to her sister. It was she who told her husband—this fellow who's just sneaked out. He came to me and betrayed them; he was willing to ruin the old man and the girl to win riches for himself. But he's gone; he'll not return; we've seen and heard the last of them; one fears the jail, the other the wrath of his wife; and that's the end." Then Betelnut Jack, as he lighted a cigar, spoke the word which told to folk initiate of a division of spoil on the morrow. As I arose, he said: "Ask Lorns to come here."

"Well," remarked the Old Cattleman when the Sour Gentleman was done, "I don't want to say nothin' to discourage you-all, but if I'd picked up your hand that time I wouldn't have played it. I shorely would have let that Dutch girl keep her beads. Didn't the thing ha'nt you afterwards?"

"It gave me a deal of uneasiness," responded the Sour Gentleman. "I am not proud of my performance. And yet, I don't see what else I might have done. Those diamonds were as good as in the hands of Betelnut Jack from the moment the skulking brother-in-law brought him the information."

"It's one relief," observed the Red Nosed

THE BLACK LION INN.

Gentleman, "to know how that scoundrel came off no richer by his treachery."

"What I observes partic'lar in the narration," said the Old Cattleman, "is how luck is the preedominatin' feacher throughout. The girl an' her old pap has bad luck in losin' the gew-gaw's. You-all customs sharps has good luck in havin' the news brought to your hand as to where them diamonds is hid, by a coyote whom you can bluff plumb outen the play at the finish. As for the coyote informer, why he has luck in bein' allowed to live.

"An' speakin' of luck, seein' that in this yere story-tellin' arrangement that seems to have grown up in our midst, I'm the next chicken on the roost, I'll onfold to you gents concernin' 'The Luck of Cold-sober Simms.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

Which this yere tale is mighty devious, not to say disj'inted, because, d'you see! from first to last, she's all the truth. Now, thar is folks sech as Injuns an' them sagacious sports which we-all terms philosophers, who talks of truth bein' straight. Injuns will say a liar has a forked tongue, while philosophers will speak of a straight ondeviatin' narrative, meanin' tharby to indooce you to regyard said story as the emanation of honesty in its every word. For myse'f I don't subscribe none to these yere phrases. In my own experience it's the lies that runs in a straight line like a bullet, whereas the truth goes onder an' over, an' up an' down, doubles an' jumps sideways a dozen times before ever it finally finds its camp in what book-sharps call the "climax." Which I says ag'in that this tale, bein' troo, has nacherally as many kinks in it as a new lariat.

Bein' thoughtful that a-way, an' preyed on by a desire to back-track every fact to its fountain-head, meanwhile considerin' how different the kyards would have fallen final if something prior had been

THE BLACK LION INN.

done or left ondone, has ever been my weakness. It's allers so with me. I can recall as a child how back in Tennessee I deevotes hours when fish-in' or otherwise uselessly engaged, to wonderin' whoever I'd have been personal if my maw had died in her girlhood an' pap had wedded someone else. It's plumb too many for me; an' now an' then when in a sperit of onusual cog'tation, I ups an' wonders where I'd be if both my maw an' pap had cashed in as colts, I'd jest simply set down he'pless, on-qualified to think at all. It's plain that in sech on-toward events as my two parents dyin', say, at the age of three, I sort o' wouldn't have happened none. This yere solemn view never fails to give me the horrors.

I fixes the time of this story easy as bein' that eepock when Jim East an' Bob Pierce is sheriffs of the Panhandle, with headquarters in Tascosa, an' Bob Roberson is chief of the L I T ranch. These yere evidences of merit on the parts of them three gents has not, however, anything to do with how Cold-sober Simms gets rich at farobank; how two hold-ups plots to rob him; how he's saved by the inadvertent capture of a bob-cat who's strange to him entire; an' how the two hold-ups in their chargin over Cold-sober's escape an' the mootual doubts it engenders, pulls on each other an' relieves the Stranglers from the labor of stringin' 'em to a cottonwood.

These doin's whereof I gives you a rapid rehear-

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

sal, has their start when Old Scotty an' Locoed Charlie gets drunk in Tascosa prior to startin' west on their buckboard with the mailbags of the Lee-Scott ranch. Locoed Charlie an' Old Scotty is drunk when they pulls out; Cold-sober Simms is with 'em as a passenger. At their night camp half way to the Lee-Scott, Locoed Charlie, whose head can't stand the strain of Jenkins' nose-paint, makes war-medicine an' lays for Old Scotty all spraddled out. As the upcome of these yere hostilities, Old Scotty confers a most elab'rate beatin' on Locoed Charlie; after which they-all cooks their grub, feeds, an' goes to sleep.

But Locoed Charlie don't go to sleep; he lays thar drunk an' disgruntled an' hungerin' to play even. As a good revengeful scheme, Locoed Charlie allows he'll get up an' secrete the mailbag, thinkin' tharby to worry Old Scotty till he sweats blood. Locoed Charlie packs the mailbag over among some rocks which is thick grown with cedar bresh. When it comes sun-up an' Locoed Charlie is sober an' repents, an' tells Old Scotty of his little game, neither he nor Scotty can find that mailbag nohow. Locoed Charlie shore hides her good.

Locoed Charlie an' Scotty don't dare go on without it, but stays an' searches; Cold-sober Simms—who is given this yere nom-de-guerre, as Colonel Sterett terms it, because he's the only sport in the Panhandle who don't drink—stays with 'em to help on the hunt. At last, failin' utter to discover the

THE BLACK LION INN.

missin' mail, Locoed Charlie an' Old Scotty returns to Tascosa in fear an' tremblin', not packin' the nerve to face McAllister, who manages for the Lee-Scott, an' inform him of the yoonique disposition they makes of his outfit's letters. This return to Tascosa is, after all, mere proodence, since McAllister is a mighty emotional manager, that a-way, an' it's as good as even money he hangs both of them culprits in that first gust of enthoosiasm which would be shore to follow any explanation they can make. So they returns; an' because he can't he'p himse'f none, bein' he's only a passenger on that buckboard, Cold-sober Simms returns with 'em. No, the mailbag is found a week later by a Lee-Scott rider, an' for the standin' of Locoed Charlie an' Scotty it's as well he does.

Cold-sober is some sore at bein' baffled in his trip to the Lee-Scott since he aims to go to work thar as a rider. To console himse'f, he turns in an' bucks a faro game that a brace of onknown black-laigs who shows in Tascosa from Fort Elliot the day prior, has onfurled in James' s'loon. As sometimes happens, Cold-sober plays in all brands an' y'earmarks of luck, an' in four hours breaks the bank. It ain't overstrong, no sech institootion of finance in fact as Cherokee Hall's faro game in Wolfville, an' when Cold-sober calls the last nineking turn for one hundred, an' has besides a hundred on the nine, coppered, an' another hundred open on the king, tharby reapin' six hundred dol-

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

lars as the froot of said feat, the sharp who's deal-in' turns up his box an' tells Cold-sober to set in his chips to be cashed. Cold-sober sets 'em in; nine thousand five hundred dollars bein' the round-up, an' the dealer-sharp hands over the dinero. Then in a sperit of resentment the dealer-sharp picks up the faro-box an' smashes it ag'in the wall.

"Thar bein' nothin' left," he says to his fellow black-laig, who's settin' in the look-out's chair, "for you an' me but to prance out an' stand up a stage, we may as well dismiss that deal-box from our affairs. I knowed that box was a hoodoo ever since Black Morgan gets killed over it in Mobeetie; an' so I tells you, but you-all wouldn't heed."

Cold-sober is shore elated about his luck; them nine thousand odd dollars is more wealth than he ever sees; an' how to dispose of it, now he's got it, begins to bother Cold-sober a heap. One gent says, "Hive it in Howard's Store!" another su'gests he leave it with old man Cohn; while still others agrees it's Cold-sober's dooty to blow it in.

"Which if I was you-all," says Johnny Cook of the L I T outfit, "I'd shore sally forth an' buy nose-paint with that treasure while a peso remained."

But Cold-sober turns down these divers proposals an' allows he'll pack said roll in his pocket a whole lot, which he accordin' does.

Cold-sober hangs 'round Tascosa for mighty near a week, surrenderin' all thought of gettin' to the Lee-Scott ranch, feelin' that he's now too rich to

THE BLACK LION INN.

punch cattle. Doorin' this season of idleness an' ease, Cold-sober bunks in with a jimcrow English doctor who's got a 'doby in Tascosa an' who calls himse'f Chepp. He's a decent form of maverick, however, this yere Chepp, an' him an' Cold-sober becomes as thick as thieves.

Cold-sober's stay with Chepp is brief as I states; in a week he gets restless ag'in for work; where-upon he hooks up with Roberson, an' goes p'intin' south across the Canadian on a L I T hoss to hold down one of that brand's sign-camps in Mitchell's canyon. It's only twenty miles, an' he's thar in half a day—him an' Wat Peacock who's to be his mate. An' Cold-sober packs with him that fortune of ninety-five hundred.

The two black-laigs who's been depleted that away still hankers about Tascosa; but as mighty likely they don't own the riches to take 'em out o' town, not much is thought. Nor does it ruffle the feathers of commoonal suspicion when the two disappears a few days after Cold-sober goes ridin' away to assoome them L I T reesponsibilities in Mitchell's canyon. The public is too busy to bother itse'f about 'em. It comes out later, however, that the goin' of Cold-sober has everything to do with the exodus of them hold-ups, an' that they've been layin' about since they loses their roll on a chance of gettin' it back. When Cold-sober p'intes south for Mitchell's that time, it's as good as these outlaws asks. They figgers on trailin' him to Mitchell's an'

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

hidin' out until some hour when Peacock's off foolin' about the range; when they argues Cold-sober would be plumb easy, an' they'll kill an' skelp him an' clean him up for his money, an' ride away.

"In fact," explains the one Cold-sober an' Peacock finds alive, "it's our idee that the killin' an' skelpin' an' pillagin' of Cold-sober would get layed to Peacock, which would mean safety for us an' at the same time be a jest on Peacock that would be plumb hard to beat." That was the plan of these outlaws; an' the cause of its failure is the followin' episode, to wit:

It looks like this Doc Chepp is locoed to collect wild anamiles that a-way.

"Which I wants," says this shorthorn Chepp, "a speciment of every sort o' the fauna of these yere regions, savin' an' exceptin' polecats. I knows enough of the latter pungent beast from an encounter I has with one, to form notions ag'in 'em over which not even the anxious cry of science can preevail. Polecats is barred from my c'llections. But," an' said Chepp imparts this last to Cold-sober as the latter starts for Mitchell's, "if by any sleight or dexterity you-all accomplishes the capture of a bob-cat, bring the interestin' creature to me at once. An' bring him alive so I may observe an' note his pecooliar traits."

It's the third mornin' in Mitchell's when a bob-cat is seen by Cold-sober an' Peacock to go sa'nterin' up the valley. Mebby this yere bob-cat's home-

THE BLACK LION INN.

less; mebbby he's a dissoloote bob-cat an' has been out all night carousin' with other bob-cats an' is simply late gettin' in; be the reason of his appearance what it may, Cold-sober remembers about Doc Chepp's wish to own a bob-cat, an' him an' Peacock lets go all holds, leaps for their ponies an' gives chase. Thar's a scramblin' run up the canyon; then Peacock gets his rope onto it, an' next Cold-sober fastens with his rope, an' you hear me, gents, between 'em they almost rends this yere onhappy bob-cat in two. They pauses in time, however, an' after a fearful struggle they succeeds in stuffin' the bob-cat into Peacock's leather laiggin's, which the latter gent removes for that purpose. Bound hand an' foot, an' wropped in the laiggin's so tight he can hardly squawl, that bob-cat's put before Cold-sober on his saddle; an' this bein' fixed, Cold-sober heads for Tascosa to present him to his naturalist friend, Chepp, Peacock scamperin' cheerfully along like a drunkard to a barbecue regyardin' the racket as a ondeniable excuse for gettin' soaked.

This adventure of the bob-cat is the savin' clause in the case of Cold-sober Simms. As the bob-cat an' him an' Peacock rides away, them two male-factors is camped not five miles off, over by the Serrita la Cruz, an' arrangin' to go projectin' 'round for Cold-sober an' his ninety-five hundred that very evenin'. In truth, they execootes their scheme; but only to find when they jumps his camp in Mitchell's that Cold-sober's done vamosed a whole lot.

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

It's then trouble begins to gather for the two rustlers. The one who deals the game that time is so overcome by Cold-sober's absence, he peevishly puts it up that his pard gives Cold-sober warnin' with the idee of later whackin' up the roll with him by way of a reward for his virchoo. Nacherally no se'f-respectin' miscreant will submit to sech impeachments, an' the accoused makes a heated retort, punctuatin' his observations with his gun. Thar-upon the other proceeds to voice his feelin's with his six-shooter; an' the mootual remarks of these yere dispoontants is so well aimed an' ackerate that next evenin' when Cold-sober an' Peacock returns, they finds one dead an' t'other dyin' with even an' exact jestic broodin' over all.

As Cold-sober an' Peacock is settin' by their fire that night, restin' from their labors in plantin' the two hold-ups, Cold-sober starts up sudden an' says:

"Yereafter I adopts a bob-cat for my coat-o'-arms. Also, I changes my mind about Howard, an' to-morry I'll go chargin' into Tascosa an' leave said ninety-five hundred in his iron box. Thar's more 'bad men' at Fort Elliot than them two we plants, an' mebbly some more of 'em may come a-weavin' up the Canadian with me an' my wealth as their objective p'int."

Peacock endorses the notion enthoosiastic, an' declar's himse'f in on the play as a body-guard;

THE BLACK LION INN.

for he sees in this yere second expedition a new o'casion for another drunk, an' Peacock jest nacherally dotes on a debauch.

"And what did your Cold-sober Simms," asked the Sour Gentleman, "finally do with his money? Did he go into the cattle business?"

"Never buys a hoof," returned the Old Cattleman. "No, indeed; he loses it ag'in monte in Kelly's s'loon in Dodge. Charley Bassett who's marshal at the time tries to git Cold-sober to pass up that monte game. But thar ain't no headin' him; he would buck it, an' so the sharp who's dealin', Butcher Knife Bill it is—turns in an' knocks Cold-sober's horns plumb off."

The sudden collapse of the volatile Cold-sober's fortunes was quite a dampener to the Sour Gentleman; he evidently entertained a hope that the lucky cow-boy was fated to a rise in life. The news of his final losses had less effect on the Red Nosed Gentleman who, having witnessed no little gambling in his earlier years, seemed better prepared. In truth, a remark he let fall would show as much.

"I was sure he would lose it," said the Red Nosed Gentleman. "Men win money only to lose it to the first game they can find. However, to change the subject:" Here the Red Nosed Gentleman beamed upon the Jolly Doctor. "Sir, the hour is young.

THE LUCK OF COLD-SOBER SIMMS.

Can't you aid us to finish the evening with another story?"

"There is one I might give you," responded the Jolly Doctor. "It is of a horse-race like that Rescue of Connelly you related and was told me by an old friend and patient who I fear was a trifle wild as a youth. This is the story as set forth by himself, and for want of a more impressive title, we may call it 'How Prince Rupert Lost.'"

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

And now I'll tell you how I once threw stones at Hartford and thereby gained queer money to carry me to the bedside of my mother at her death.

My father, you should know, was a lawyer of eminence and wide practice at the New York bar. His income was magnificent; yet—thriftless and well living—he spent it with both hands. My mother, who took as little concern for the future as himself, aided pleasantly in scattering the dollars as fast as they were earned.

With no original estate on either side, and not a shilling saved, it was to be expected that my father's death should leave us wanting a penny. I was twenty-two when the blow fell; he died stricken of an apoplexy, his full habit and want of physical exercise marking him to that malady as a certain prey.

I well recall how this death came upon us as a bolt from the blue. And while his partner stood over our affairs like a brother, when the debts were paid there remained no more than would

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

manage an annuity for my mother of some six hundred dollars. With that she retreated to Westchester and lived the little balance of her years with a maiden sister who owned a starved farm, all chequered of stone fences, in that region of breath-taking hills.

It stood my misfortune that I was bred as the son of a wealthy man. Columbia was my school and the generosity of my father gilded those college days with an allowance of five thousand a year. I became proficient—like many another hare-brain—in everything save books, and was a notable guard on the University Eleven and pulled the bow oar in the University Eight. When I came from college the year before my father's death I could write myself adept of a score of sciences, each physical, not one of which might serve to bring a splinter of return—not one, indeed, that did not demand the possession of largest wealth in its pursuit. I was poor in that I did not have a dollar when brought to face the world; I was doubly poor with a training that had taught me to spend thousands. Therefore, during the eighteen years to succeed my father's going, was I tossed on the waves of existence like so much wreckage; and that I am not still so thrown about is the offspring of happy exigency rather than a condition due to wisdom of my own.

My ship of money did not come in until after I'd encountered my fortieth year. For those

THE BLACK LION INN.

eighteen years next prior, if truth must out, I'd picked up intermittent small money following the races. Turf interest of that day settled about such speedy ones as Goldsmith Maid, Lucy, Judge Fullerton and American Girl, while Budd Doble, Dan Mace and Jack Splan were more often in the papers than was the President. I followed the races, I say; sometimes I was flush of money, more often I was poor; but one way or another I clung to the skirts of the circuits and managed to live.

Now, since age has come to my head and gold to my fingers, and I've had time and the cooled blood wherewith to think, I've laid my ill courses of those eighteen evil years to the doors of what vile ideals of life are taught in circles of our very rich. What is true now, was true then. Among our "best people"—if "best" be the word where "worst" might better fit the case—who is held up to youthful emulation? Is it the great lawyer, or writer, or preacher, or merchant, or man of medicine? Is it he of any trade or calling who stands usefully and profitably at the head of his fellows? Never; such gentry of decent effort and clean dollars to flow therefrom are not mentioned; or if they be, it is not for compliment and often with disdain.

And who has honor in the social conventions of our American aristocrats? It is young A, who drives an automobile some eighty miles an hour;

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

or young B, who sails a single-sticker until her canvas is blown from the bolt ropes; or young C, who rides like an Arab at polo; or young D, who drives farthest at golf; or young E, who is the headlong first in a paper chase. These be the ideals; these the promontories to steer by. Is it marvel then when a youth raised of those "best circles" falls out of his nest of money that he lies sprawling, unable to honestly aid himself? Is it strange that he afterward lives drunken and precariously and seldom in walks asking industry and hard work? His training has been to spend money, while his contempt was reserved for those who labored its honorable accumulation. Such wrong-taught creatures, bereft of bank accounts, are left to adopt the races, the gambling tables, or the wine trade; and with all my black wealth of experience, I sit unable to determine which is basest and most loathly of the three.

During those eighteen roving, race-course years I saw my mother but seldom; and I never exposed to her my methods of life. I told her that I "traveled;" and she, good, innocent girl! gained from the phrase a cloudy notion that I went the trusted ambassador to various courts of trade of some great manufactory. I protected her from the truth to the end, and she died brightly confident that her son made a brilliant figure in the world.

While on my ignoble wanderings I kept myself

THE BLACK LION INN.

in touch with one whom I might trust, and who, dwelling near my mother, saw her day by day. He was ever in possession of my whereabouts. Her health was a bit perilous from heart troubles, and I, as much as I might, maintained arrangements to warn me should she turn seriously ill.

At first I looked hourly for such notice; but as month after month went by and no bad tidings—nothing save word at intervals that she was passing her quiet, uneventful days in comfort, and as each occasional visit made to Westchester confirmed such news, my apprehension became dulled and dormant. It was a surprise then, and pierced me hideously, when I opened the message that told how her days were down to hours and she lay dying.

The telegram reached me in Hartford. When I took it from the messenger's hand I was so poor I could not give him a dime for finding me; and as he had been to some detective pains in the business, he left with an ugly face as one cheated of appreciation. I could not help it; there dwelt not so much as one cheap copper in my pocket. Also, my clothes were none of the best; for I'd been in ill fortune, and months of bankruptcy had dealt unkindly with my wardrobe. But there should be no such word as fail; I must find the money to go to her—find it even though it arrive on the tides of robbery.

Luck came to me. Within the minute to fol-

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

low the summons, and while the yellow message still fluttered between my fingers, I was hailed from across the street. The hail came from a certain coarse gentleman who seemed born to horse-races as to an heritage and was, withal, one of the few who reaped a harvest from them. This fortunate one was known to the guild as Surething Pete.

It was fairly early of the morning, eight o'clock, and Surething Pete in the wake of his several morning drinks—he was a celebrated sot—was having his boots cleaned. It is a curious thing that half-drunken folk are prone to this improvement. That is why a boot-black's chair is found so frequently just outside the portals of a rum shop. The prospect of a seat allures your drunkard fresh from his latest drink; he may sit at secure ease and please his rum-contented fancy with a review of the passing crowds; also, the Italian digging and brushing about his soles gives an impression that he is subject of concern to some one and this nurses a sense of importance and comes as vague tickle to his vanity.

Surething Pete, as related, was under the hands of a boot-black when I approached. He was much older than I and regarded me as a boy.

“Broke, eh?” said Surething Pete. His eye, though bleary, was keen. Then he tendered a quarter. “Take this and go and eat. I’ll wait for you here. Come back in fifteen minutes and

THE BLACK LION INN.

I'll put you in line to make some money. I'd give you more, but I'm afraid you wouldn't return."

Make money! I bolted two eggs and a cup of coffee and was back in ten minutes. Surething's second shoe was receiving its last polish. He paid the artist, and then turning led me to a rear room of the nearby ginmill.

"This is it," said Surething. His voice was rum-husky but he made himself clear. "There's the special race between Prince Rupert and Creole Belle. You know about that?"

Of course I knew. These cracks had been especially matched against each other. It would be a great contest; the odds were five to three on Prince Rupert; thousands were being wagered; the fraternity had talked of nothing else for three weeks. Of course I knew!

"Well," went on Surething, "I've been put wrong, understand! I've got my bundle on Creole Belle and stand to win a fortune if Prince Rupert is beaten. I supposed that I'd got his driver fixed. I paid this crook a thousand cold and gave him tickets on Creole Belle which stand him to win five thousand more to throw the race. But now, with the race to be called at two o'clock, I get it straight he's out to double-cross me. He'll drive Rupert to win; an' if he does I'm a gone fawnskin. But I've thought of another trick."

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

Then suddenly: "I'll tell you what you do; get into this wagon outside and come with me."

With the last word, Surething again headed for the street. We took a carriage that stood at the door. In thirty minutes we were on the Charter Oak track. At this early hour, we had the course to ourselves. Surething walked up the home-stretch until we arrived at a point midway between the half mile post and the entrance to the stretch.

"See that tree?" said Surething, and he pointed to a huge buttonwood—a native—that stood perhaps twenty feet inside the rail. "Come over and take a look at it."

The great buttonwood was hollow; or rather a half had been torn away by some storm. What remained, however, was growing green and strong and stood in such fashion towards the course that it offered a perfect hiding place. By lying close within the hollow one was screened from any who might drive along.

"This is the proposition," continued Surething, when I had taken in the convenient buttonwood and its advantages. "This Rupert can beat the Belle if he's driven. But he's as nervous as a girl. If a fly should light on him he'd go ten feet in the air—understand? Here now is what I want of you. I'll tell you what you're to do; then I'll tell you what you're to get. I want you to plant yourself behind this tree—better come

THE BLACK LION INN.

here as early as the noon hour. The track'll be clear and no one'll see you go under cover, understand! As I say, I want you to plant yourself in the sheltering hollow of this buttonwood. You ought to have three rocks—say as big as a guinea's egg—three stones, d'ye see, 'cause the race is heats, best three in five. You must lay dead so no one'll get on. As Rupert and the Belle sweep 'round the curve for the stretch, you want to let 'em get a trifle past you. Then you're to step out and nail Rupert—he'll have the pole without a doubt—and nail Rupert, I say, with a rock. That'll settle him; he'll be up in the air like a swallow-bird. It'll give the Belle the heat."

Having gotten thus far, Surething fell into a mighty fit of coughing; his face congested and his eyes rolled. For a moment I feared that apoplexy—my father's death—might take him in the midst of his hopeful enterprise and deprive me of this chance of riches. I was not a little relieved therefore when he somewhat recovered and went on:

"That trick's as safe as seven-up," continued Surething. "You'll be alone up here, as everybody else will be down about the finish. The drivers, driving like mad, won't see you—won't see anything but their horses' ears. You must get Rupert—get him three times—every time he comes 'round—understand?"

I understood.

"Right you are," concluded Surething. "And

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

to make it worth your while, here are tickets on the Belle that call for five hundred dollars if she wins. And here's a dollar also for a drink and another feed to steady your wrists for the stone-throwing."

It will seem strange and may even attract resentment that I, a college graduate and come of good folk, should accept such commission from a felon like Surething Pete. All I say is that I did accept it; was glad to get it; and for two hours before the great contest between Prince Rupert and Creole Belle was called, I lay ensconced in my buttonwood ambush, armed of three stones like David without the sling, ready to play my part towards the acquirement of those promised hundreds. And with that, my thoughts were on my mother. The money would count handsomely to procure me proper clothes and take me home. To me the proposed bombardment of the nervous Rupert appeared an opportunity heaven-sent when my need was most.

For fear of discovery and woe to follow, I put my tickets in the hands of one who, while as poor as I, could yet be trusted. He was, if the Belle won, to cash them; and should I be observed at my sleight of hand work and made to fly, he would meet me in a near-by village with the proceeds.

At prompt two o'clock the race was called. There were bustling crowds of spectators; but

THE BLACK LION INN.

none came near my hiding place, as Surething Pete had foreseen. The horses got off with the second trial. They trotted as steadily as clock-work. As the pair rounded the second curve they were coming like the wind; drivers leaning far forward in their sulkies, eagle of glance, steady of rein, soothing with encouraging words, and "sending them," as the phrase is, for every inch. It was a splendid race and splendidly driven, with Rupert on the pole and a half length to the good. They flashed by my post like twin meteors.

As they passed I stepped free of my button-wood; and then, as unerringly as one might send a bullet—for I had not been long enough from school to forget how to throw—my first pebble, full two ounces, caught the hurrying Rupert in mid-rib.

Mighty were the results. Prince Rupert leaped into the air—stumbled—came almost to a halt—then into the air a second time—and following that, went galloping and pitching down the course, his driver sawing and whipping in distracted alternation. Meanwhile, Creole Belle slipped away like a spirit in harness and finished a wide winner. I took in results from my button-wood. There was no untoward excitement about the grandstand or among the judges. Good; I was not suspected!

There ensued a long wait; planted close to my tree I wearied with the aching length of it. Then

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

Rupert and the Belle were on the track again. The gong sounded; I heard the word "Go!" even in my faraway hiding; the second heat was on. It was patterned of the first; the two took the curve and flew for the head of the stretch as they did before; Rupert on the pole and leading with half a length. I repeated the former success. The stone struck poor Rupert squarely. He shot straight toward the skies and all but fell in the sulky when he came down. It was near to ending matters; for Rupert regained his feet in scantiest time to get inside the distance flag before the Belle streamed under the wire.

Creole Belle! two straight heats! What a row and a roar went up about the pools! What hedging was done! From five to three on Rupert the odds shifted to seven to two on Creole Belle. I could hear the riot and interpret it. I clung closely to the protecting buttonwood; there was still a last act before the play was done.

It was the third heat. The pace, comparatively, was neither hot nor hard; the previous exertions of both Rupert and the Belle had worn away the wire edge and abated their appetites for any utmost speed. Relatively, however, conditions were equal and each as tired as the other; and as Rupert was the quicker in the get-away and never failed of the pole in the first quarter, the two as they neared me offered the old picture of Rupert on the rail and leading by half his length.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Had I owned a better chance of observation, I might have noted as Prince Rupert drew near the buttonwood that his mind was not at ease. He remembered those two biting flints; they were lessons not lost on him. As I stepped from concealment to hurl my last stone, it is to be believed that Rupert—his alarmed eyes roving for lions in his path—glimpsed me. Certain it is that as the missile flew from my hand, Rupert swerved across the track, the hub of his sulky narrowly missing the shoulder of the mare.

The sudden shift confused my markmanship, and instead of Rupert, the stone smote the driver on the ear and all but swept him from his seat. It did the work, however; whether from the stone, the whip, or that state of general perturbation wherein his fell experiences had left his nerves, Rupert went fairly to pieces. Before he was on his feet again and squared away, the Belle had won.

Peeping from my hiding place I could tell that my adroit interference in the late contest was becoming the subject of public concern. Rupert's driver, still sitting in his sulky, was holding high his whip in professional invocation of the judges' eyes. And that ill-used horseman was talking; at intervals he pointed with the utmost feeling towards my buttonwood. Nor was his oratory without power; he had not discoursed long when amid an abundance of shouts and oaths and

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

brandished canes, one thousand gentlemen of the turf were under head in my direction.

It was interesting, but I did not stay in contemplation of the spectacle; I out and bolted. I crossed the track and ran straight for the end fence. This latter barrier looked somewhat high; I made no essay to climb, but, picking a broadest board, launched myself against it, shoulder on. The board fell and I was through the gap and in an open field.

But why waste time with that hustling hue and cry? It was futile for all its indignant energy; I promise you, I made good my distance. Young, strung like a harp, with a third of a mile start and able to speed like a deer, I ran the hunt out of sight in the first ten minutes. It was all earnestness, that flight of mine. I fled through three villages and a puny little river that fell across my path. I welcomed the river, for I knew it would cool the quest.

Of a verity! I got my money, and my stone throwing was not to be in vain. True, the driver and the owner of Rupert both protested, but the track statutes were inexorable. The judges could take no cognizance of that cannonading from the buttonwood and gave the race—three straight heats—to Creole Belle. Surething Pete won his thousands; and as for me, my friend and I encountered according to our tryst and he brought me my money safe. Within fifteen hours from

THE BLACK LION INN.

that time when I dealt disaster to Rupert from the sheltering buttonwood, clothed and in respectable tears, I was kneeling by my mother's side and taking what sorrowful joy I might for having arrived while she was yet equal to the bestowal of her blessing.

It was to be our last evening about the great stone fireplace; the last of our stories would be told. The roads were now broken, and though a now-and-then upset was more than likely to enliven one's goings about, sleighs and sleds as schemes of conveyance were pronounced to be among things possible. As we drew our chairs about the blaze, the jangle of an occasional leash of bells showed how some brave spirit was even then abroad.

Under these inspiring conditions, the Sour Gentleman and the Red Nosed Gentleman declared their purpose of on the morrow pressing for the railway station eighteen miles away. To this end they had already chartered a sleigh, and the word was out that it be at the Inn door by ten of the morning clock.

For myself, nothing was driving me of business or concern, and I was in no haste to leave; and the Old Cattleman and his ward, Sioux Sam, were also of a mind to abide where they were for

HOW PRINCE RUPERT LOST.

a farther day or two at least. But the going of the Sour Gentleman and the Red Nosed Gentleman would destroy our circle, wherefore we were driven to regard this as "our last evening," and to crown it honorably the Jolly Doctor brewed a giant bowl of what he described as punch. The others, both by voice and the loyalty wherewith they applied themselves to its disappearance, avowed its excellencies, and on that point Sioux Sam and I were content to receive their words.

The Red Nosed Gentleman—who had put aside his burgundy in compliment to the Jolly Doctor and his punch, and seemed sensibly exhilarated by this change of beverage—was the first to give the company a story. It was of his younger, green-cloth days, and the title by which he distinguished it was "When I Ran the Shotgun."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

About this time the city of Providence fell mid-spasm in a fit of civic morality. Communities, like individuals, are prone to starts of strenuous virtue, and Providence, bemoaning her past iniquities, was pushing towards a pure if not a festive life. And because in this new mood to be excellent it was the easiest, nearest thing, Providence smote upon the gambling brotherhood with the heavy hand of the police. The faro games and wheels of roulette were swept away and more than one who had shared their feverish profits were sent into captivity. Yea forsooth! the gay fraternity of fortune whose staff of life was cards found themselves borne upon with the burden of bad days.

For myself I conceived this to be the propitious moment to open a faro room of my own. I had been for long of the guild of gamblers yet had never soared to the brave heights of proprietorship. I had bucked the games, but never dealt them. It came to me as a thought that in the beating midst of this moral tempest dwelt my

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

opportunity. Had I chosen a day of police apathy—an hour of gambling security—for such a move, I would have been set upon by every established proprietor. He would have resented my rivalry as a game warden would the intrusions of a poacher. And I'd have been wiped out—devoured horn and hide and hoof as by a band of wolves.

Under these new conditions of communal virtue, however, and with the clan of former proprietors broken and dispersed, the field was free of menace from within; I would face no risk more grievous than the constabulary. These latter I believed I might for a season avoid; particularly if I unveiled my venture in regions new and not theretofore the home of such lawless speculation.

Filled with these thoughts, I secured apartments sufficiently obscure and smuggled in the paraphernalia under cloud of night. The room was small—twenty feet square; there was space for no more than one faro table, and with such scant furnishing I went to work. For reasons which now escape me I called my place “The Shotgun.”

Heretofore I gave you assurance of the lapse of years since last I gambled at any game save the Wall Street game of stocks. I quit cards for that they were disreputable and the gains but small. Stocks, on the contrary, are endorsed as “respectable;” at stocks one may gamble without forfeiture of position; also, there exist no frontiers

THE BLACK LION INN.

to the profits which a cunning stock plan well executed may bring.

In my old simpler days, I well recall those defences of the pure gambler wherein my regard indulged. Elia once separated humanity into two tribes—those who borrow and those who lend. In my younger philosophy I also saw two septs: those who lose and those who win. To me all men were gamblers. Life itself was one continuous game of chance; and the stakes, that shelter and raiment and food and drink to compose the body's bulwark against an instant conquest by Death. Of the inherent morality of gambling I nurtured no doubts. Or, at the worst, I felt certain of its comparative morality when laid beside such commerces as banks and markets and fields of plain barter and sale. There is no trade (I said) save that of the hands which is held by the tether of any honesty. The carpenter sawing boards, the smith who beats out a horseshoe, the mason busy with trowel and mortar on sun-blistered scaffolds, hoarsely shouting "More bricks!" they in their way of life are honest. They are bound to integrity because they couldn't cheat if they would. But is the merchant selling the false for the real—the shoddy for the true—is the merchant whose advertisements are as so many false pretences paid for by the line—is he more honest than the one who cheats with cards? Is the lawyer looking looks of wisdom to hide

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

the emptiness of his ignorance? Is the doctor, profound of mien, who shakes portentous head, medicining a victim not because he has a malady but because he has a million dollars?

And if it become a question of fashion, why then, age in and age out, the gambler has been often noble and sometimes royal. In the days of the Stuarts, or later among the dull ones of Hanover, was it the peasant or the prince who wagered his gold at cards? Why man! every royal court was a gambling house; every king, save one—and he disloved and at the last insane—a gambler. Are not two-thirds of the homes of our American nobility—our folk of millions and Fifth Avenue—replete of faro and roulette and the very hotbed of a poisonous bridge whist? Fy, man, fy! you who denounce gambling but preach your own plebeianism—proclaim your own vulgarity! The gambler has been ever the patrician.

With but one table, whereat I would preside as dealer, I required no multitude to man The Shotgun. I called to my aid three gentlemen of fortune—seedy and in want they were and glad to earn a dollar. One was to be sentinel at the door, one would perch Argus-like on the lookout's stool, while the third,—an old suspicious camp-follower of Chance,—kept the case. This latter, cautious man! declined my service unless I put steel bars on the only door, and as well on the only window. These he conceived to be some safeguard against

THE BLACK LION INN.

invasions. They were not; but I spent money to put them in place to the end that his fluttered nerves be stilled and he won to my standard. And at that, he later pursued his business as case-keeper with an ear on the door and an eye on the small barred window, sitting the while half aloof from the table and pushing the case-buttons as the cards fell from the box with a timid forefinger and as though he proposed no further immersion in current crime than was absolutely demanded by the duties of his place. He sat throughout the games a picture of apprehension.

For myself, and to promote my profits, I gave both my people and my customers every verbal bond of safety. The story went abroad that I was "protected;" that no wolf of the police dared so much as glance at flock of mine. The Shotgun was immune of arrest, so ran the common tale, and as much as leer and look and smile and shrug of shoulder might furnish them I gave the story wings.

This public theory of safety was necessary to success. In the then hectic conditions, and briskly in the rear of a stern suppression of resorts that had flourished for decades unshaken of the law, wanting this feeling of security there would have come not one dollar to take its hopeful chances at The Shotgun. As it was, however, the belief that I lived amply "protected" took prompt deep root. And the fact that The

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

Shotgun opened in the face of storms which smote without pity upon others, was itself regarded as proof beyond dispute. No one would court such dangers unless his footing were as unshakable as Gibraltar. Thereupon folk with a heart for faro came blithely and stood four deep about my one table; vast was the business I accomplished and vast were the sums changed in. And behold! I widely prospered.

When I founded The Shotgun, I was richer of hope than of money; but fortune smiled and within a fortnight my treasure was told by thousands. Indeed, my patrons played as play those who are starved to gamble; that recess of faro enforced of the police had made them hawk-hungry. And my gains rolled in.

While I fostered the common thought that no interference of the law would occur and The Shotgun was sacred ground, I felt within my own breast a sense of much unsafety. Damocles with his sword—hung of a hair and shaken of a breeze—could have been no more eaten of unease. I knew that I was wooing disaster, challenging a deepest peril. The moment The Shotgun became a part of police knowledge, I was lost.

Still, I dealt on; the richness of my rewards the inducement and the optimism of the born gambler giving me courage to proceed. It fed my vanity, too, and hugely pleased my pride to be thus looked upon as eminent in my relations with the powers

THE BLACK LION INN.

that ruled. They were proud, even though par-lous days, those days when I ran The Shotgun.

While I walked the field of my enterprise like a conqueror, I was not without the prudence that taketh account in advance and prepareth for a fall. Aside from the table whereon dwelt the lay-out, box and check rack, and those half-dozen chairs which encircled it, the one lone piece of furniture which The Shotgun boasted was a rotund lounge. Those who now and then reposed themselves thereon noted and denounced its hard unfitness. There was neither softness nor spring to that lounge; to sit upon it was as though one sat upon a Saratoga trunk. But it was in a farthest corner and distant as much as might be from the game; and therefore there arose but few to try its indurated merits and complain.

That lounge of unsympathetic seat was my secret—my refuge—my last resort. I alone was aware of its construction; and that I might be thus alone, I had been to hidden and especial pains to bring it from New York myself. That lounge was no more, no less than a huge, capacious box. You might lift the seat and it would open like a trunk. Within was ample room for one to lie at length. Once in one could let down the cover and lock it on the inside; that done, there again it stood to the casual eye, a lounge, nothing save a lounge and neither hint nor token of the fugitive within.

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

My plan to save myself when the crash should come was plain and sure. There were but two lights—gas jets, both—in The Shotgun; these were immediately above the table, low hung and capped with green shades to save the eyes of players. The light was reflected upon the layout; all else was in the shadow. This lack of light was no drawback to my popularity. Your folk who gamble cavil not at shadows for themselves so long as cards and deal-box are kept strongly in the glare. In event of a raid, it was my programme to extinguish the two lights—a feat easily performable from the dealer's chair—and seizing the money in the drawer, grope my way under cover of darkness for that excellent lounge and conceal myself. It would be the work of a moment; the folk would be huddled about the table and not about the lounge; the time lost by the police while breaking through those defences of bars and bolts would be more than enough.

By the time the lights were again turned on and the Goths in possession, I would have disappeared. No one would know how and none know where. When the blue enemy, despairing of my apprehension, had at last withdrawn with what prisoners had been made, I would be left alone. I might then uncover myself and take such subsequent flight as best became my liberty and its continuance.

Often I went over this plan in my thoughts—

THE BLACK LION INN.

a fashion of mental rehearsal, as it were—and the more I considered the more certain I became that when the pinch arrived it would not fail. As I've stated, none shared with me my secret of that hinged and hollow couch; it was my insurance—my cave of retreat in any tornado of the law; and the knowledge thereof steadied me and aided my courage to compose those airs of cheerful confidence which taught others safety and gave countenance to the story of my unqualified and sure "protection!" Alas! for the hour that unmasked me; from that moment The Shotgun fell away; my stream of golden profits ran dry; from a spectacle of reverence and respect I became the nine-day byword of my tribe!

It was a crowded, thriving midnight at The Shotgun. I had been running an uninterrupted quartette of months; and having had good luck to the point of miracles, my finances were flourishing with five figures in their plethoric count. From a few poor hundreds, my "roll" when I snapped the rubber band about it and planted it deep within the safety of my pocket, held over fifty thousand dollars. Quite a fortune; and so I thought myself.

It was, I repeat, a busy, winning midnight at The Shotgun. There were doubtless full forty visitors in the cramped room. These were crowded about the table, for the most part playing, reaching over each other's shoulders or under

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

each other's elbows, any way and every way to get their wagers on the layout. I was dealing, while to right and left sat my henchmen of the lookout and the case.

As on every evening, I lived on the feather-edge of apprehension, fearing a raid. My eye might be on the thirteen cards and the little fortunes they carried, but my ear was ever alert for a first dull footfall that would tell of destruction on its lowering way.

There had been four hours of brisk, remunerative play—for the game began at eight—when, in the middle of a deal, there came the rush of heavy feet and a tumult of stumblings and blunderings on the stair. It was as if folk unaccustomed to the way—it being pitch dark on the stairway for caution's sake—and in vast eagerness to reach the door, had tripped and fallen. Also, if one might judge from the uproar and smothered, deep profanity of many voices there were a score engaged.

To my quick intelligence, itself for long on the rack of expectancy and therefore doubly keen, there seemed but one answer to the question, of that riot on the stair. It was the police; the Philistines were upon me; my gold mine of The Shotgun had become the target of a raid!

It was the labor of an instant. With both hands I turned out the lights; then stuffing my entire fortune into my pockets I began to push through

THE BLACK LION INN.

the ranks of bewildered gentlemen who stood swearing in frightened undertones expecting evil. Silently and with a cat's stealth, I found my way in the pitch blackness to the lounge. As I had foreseen, no one was about it to discover or to interfere. Softly I raised the cover; in a moment I was within. Lying on my side for comfort's sake, I again turned ear to passing events. I had locked the lounge and believed myself insured.

Meanwhile, within the room and in the hall beyond my grated door, the tumult gathered and grew. There came various exclamations.

"Who doused those glims?"

"Light up, somebody."

Also, there befell a volley of blows and kicks and thumps on The Shotgun's iron portals; and gruff commands:

"Open the door!"

Then some one produced a match and relighted the gas. I might tell that by a ray about the size and color of a wheat-straw which suddenly bored its yellow way through a hole in my shelter. The clamor still proceeded at the door; it seemed to augment.

Since there could be no escape—for every soul saw himself caught like a rat in a trap—the door was at last unbarred and opened, desperately. Of what avail would it be to force the arresting party to break its way? In despair the door was thrown wide and each of those within braced himself to

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

meet his fate. After all, to visit a gambling place was not the great crime; the cornered ones might feel fairly secure. It was the "proprietor" for whom the law kept sharpest tooth!

When the door opened, it opened to the admission of a most delightful disappointment. There appeared no police; no grim array of those sky-hued watch-dogs of the city's peace and order rushed through in search of quarry. Instead came innocently, deviously, and with uncertain, shuffling steps, five separate drunken gentlemen. There had been a dinner; they had fed deeply, drunk deeply; it was now their pleasure to relax themselves at play. That was all; they had sought The Shotgun with the best of motives; the confusion on the stair was the offspring of darkness and drink when brought to a conjunction. Now they were within, and reading in the faces about them—even through the mists of their condition—the terrors their advent inspired, the visiting sots were much abashed; they stood silent, and like the lamb before the shearer, they were dumb and opened not their mouths.

But discovering a danger past, the general mood soon changed. There was a space of tacit staring; then came a rout of laughter. Every throat, lately so parched, now shouted with derision. The common fear became the common jeer.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Then up started the surprised question:

“Where’s Jack?”

It had origin with one to be repeated by twenty.

“Where’s Jack?”

The barred window was still barred; I had not gone through the door; how had I managed my disappearance? It was witchery!—or like the flitting of a ghost! Even in my refuge I could feel the awe and the chill that began to creep about my visitors as they looked uneasily and repeated, as folk who touch some graveyard mystery:

“Where’s Jack?”

There was no help; fate held me in a corner and never a crack of escape! Shame-faced, dust-sprinkled and perspiring like a harvest hand—for my hiding place was not Nova Zembla—I threw back the top of the lounge and stood there—the image of confusion—the “man with a pull”—the ally of the powers—the “protected” proprietor of The Shotgun! There was a moment of silence; and next fell a whirlwind of mirth.

There is no argument for saying more. I was laughed out of Providence and into New York. The Shotgun was laughed out of existence. And with it all, I too, laughed; for was it not good, even though inadvertent comedy? Also, was it not valuable comedy to leave me better by half a hundred thousand dollars—that comedy of The Shotgun? And thereupon, while I closed my

WHEN I RAN THE SHOTGUN.

game, I opened my mouth widely and laughed with the others. In green-cloth circles the story is still told; and whenever I encounter a friend of former days, I'm inevitably recalled to my lounge-holdout and that midnight stampede of The Shotgun.

"That's where the west," observed the Old Cattleman, who had given delighted ear to the Red Nosed Gentleman's story, "that's where the west has the best of the east. In Arizona a passel of folks engaged in testin' the demerits of farobank ain't runnin' no more resks of the constables than they be of chills an' fever."

"There are laws against gambling in the west?"
This from the Jolly Doctor.

"Shore, thar's laws."

"Why, then, aren't they enforced?"

"This yere's the reason," responded the Old Cattleman. "Thar's so much more law than force, that what force exists is wholly deevoted to a round-up of rustlers an' stage hold-ups an' sech. Besides, it's the western notion to let every gent skin his own eel, an' the last thing thought of is to protect you from yourse'f. No kyard sharp can put a crimp in you onless you freely offers him a chance, an' if you-all is willin', why should the public paint for war? In the east every gent

THE BLACK LION INN.

is tryin' to play some other gent's hand; not so in that tolerant region styled the west. Which it ain't too much to say that folks get killed—an' properly—in the west for possessin' what the east calls virchoos." And here the Old Cattleman shook his head sagely over a western superiority. "The east mixes itse'f too much in a gent's private affairs. Now if Deef Smith an' Colonel Morton " he concluded, "had ondertook to pull off their dooel in the east that Texas time, the east would have come down on 'em like a fallin' star an' squelched it."

"And what was this duel you speak of?" asked the Sour Gentleman. "I, for one, would be most ready to hear the story."

"Which it's the story of 'When the Capitol Was Moved.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

When the joobilant Texans set down to kyarve out the destinies of that empire they wrests from the feeble paws of the Mexicans an' Santa Anna, they decides on Austin for the Capitol an' Old Houston to be President. An' I'll say right yere, Old Houston, by all roomer an' tradition, is mighty likely the most presidential president that ever keeps a republic guessin' as to whatever is he goin' to do next. Which he's as full of surprises as a night in Red Dog.

About the first dash ouden the box, Old Houston gets himse'f into trouble with two Lone Star leadin' citizens whose names, respective, is Colonel Morton an' jedge Webb.

Old Houston himse'f on the hocks of them vict'ries he partic'pates in, an' bein' selected president like I say, grows as full of vanity as a prairie dog. Shore! he's a hero; the drawback is that his notion of demeanin' himse'f as sech is to spread his tail feathers an' strut. Old Houston gets that puffed up, an' his dignity is that

THE BLACK LION INN.

egreegious, he feels crowded if a gent tries to walk on the same street with him.

Colonel Morton an' Jedge Webb themse'fs wades through that carnage from soda to hock freein' Texas, an' they sort o' figgers that these yere services entitles them to be heard some. Old Houston, who's born with a notion that he's doo·to make what public uproar every o'casion demands, don't encourage them two patriots. He only listens now an' then to Morton; an' as for Jedge Webb, he jest won't let that jurist talk at all.

"An' for these yere followin' reasons to wit," explains Old Houston, when some Austin sports puts it to him p'lite, but steadfast, that he's onjust to Webb. "I permits Morton to talk some, because it don't make a splinter of difference what Morton says. He can talk on any side of any subject an' no one's ediot enough to pay the least attention to them remarks. But this sityooation is changed when you-all gets to Webb. He's a disaster. Webb never opens his mouth without subtractin' from the sum total of hooman knowledge."

When Morton hears of them remarks he re-gyards himse'f as wronged.

"An' if Old Houston," observes Morton, who's a knife fighter an' has sliced offensive gents from time to time; "an' if Old Houston ain't more



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WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

gyarded in his remarks, I'll take to disapprovin' of his conduct with a bowie."

As I intimates, Old Houston is that pride-blown that you-all couldn't stay on the same range where he is. An' he's worried to a standstill for a openin' to onload on the Texas public a specimen of his dignity. At last, seein' the chances comin' some slow, he ups an' constructs the opportunity himse'f.

Old Houston's home-camp, that a-way, is at a hamlet named Washin'ton down on the Brazos. It's thar he squanders the heft of his leesure when not back of the game as President over to Austin. Thar's a clause in the constitootion which, while pitchin' onto Austin as the public's home-ranche or capitol, permits the President in the event of perils unforeseen or invasions or sech, to round up the archives an' move the capitol camp a whole lot. Old Houston, eager to be great, seizes onto this yere tenet.

"I'll jest sort o' order the capitol to come down yere where I live at," says Old Houston, "an' tharby call the waverin' attention of the Lone Star public to who I be."

As leadin' up to this atrocity an' to come within the constitootion, Old Houston allows that Austin is menaced by Comanches. Shore, it ain't menaced none; Austin would esteem the cleanin' out of that entire Comanche tribe as the labors of a holiday. But it fills into Old Houston's hand to

THE BLACK LION INN.

make this bluff as a excuse. An' with that, he issues the order to bring the whole gov'ment lay-out down to where he lives.

No, as I tells you-all before, Austin ain't in no more danger of Comanches than she is of j'inin' the church. Troo, these yere rannikaboo savages does show up in paint an' feathers over across the Colorado once or twice; but beyond a whoop or two an' a little permiscus shootin' into town which nobody minds, them vis'tations don't count.

To give you-all gents a idee how little is deemed of Comanches by them Texas forefathers, let me say a word of Bill Spence who keeps a store in Austin. Bill's addin' up Virg Horne's accounts one afternoon in his books.

"One pa'r of yaller-top, copper-toe boots for Virg, joonior, three dollars; one red cal'co dress for Missis Virg, two dollars," goes on Bill.

At this epock Bill hears a yowl; glancin' out of the winder, he counts a couple of hundred Injuns who's proselytin' about over on t'other side of the river. Bill don't get up none; he jests looks annoyed on account of that yellin' puttin' him out in his book-keepin'.

As a bullet from them savages comes singin' in the r'ar door an' buries itse'f in a ham, Bill even gets incensed.

"Hiram," he calls to his twelve-year old son, who's down cellar drawin' red-eye for a customer; "Hiram, you-all take pop's rifle, raise the hind-

WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

sight for three hundred yards, an' reprove them hostiles. Aim low, Hiram, an' if you fetches one, pop'll give you a seegyar an' let you smoke it yourse'f."

Bill goes back to Virg Horne's account, an' Hiram after slammin' away with Bill's old Hawkins once or twice comes in an' gets his seegyar.

No; Old Houston does wrong when he flings forth this yere ukase about movin' the capitol. Austin, even if a gent does have to dodge a arrer or duck a bullet as he prosecotes his daily tasks, is as safe as a camp-meetin'.

When Old Houston makes the order, one of his Brazos pards reemonstrates with him.

"Which Austin will simply go into the air all spraddled out," says this pard.

"If Austin sails up in the air an' stays thar," says Old Houston, "still you-all can gamble that this yere order goes."

"You hears," says another, "Elder Peters when he tells of how a Mexican named Mohammed commands the mountain to come to him? But the mountain calls his bluff; that promontory stands pat, an' Mohammed has to go to the mountain."

"My name's Sam Houston an' it ain't Mohommed," retorts Old Houston. "Moreover, Mohammed don't have no written constitootion."

Nacherally, when Austin gets notice of Old Houston's plan, that meetropolis r'ars back an' screams. The faro-bank folks an' the tavern folks

THE BLACK LION INN.

is speshul malignant, an' it ain't no time before they-all convenes a meetin' to express their views on Old Houston. Morton an' Jedge Webb does the oratory. An' you hear me! that assembly is shore sultry. Which the epithets they applies to Old Houston kills the grass for twenty rods about.

Austin won't move.

Austin resolves to go to war first; a small army is organized with Morton in command to gyard the State House an' the State books that a-way, an' keep Old Houston from romancin' over an' packin' 'em off a heap.

Morton is talkin' an' Webb is presidin' over this yere convocation—which the said meetin' is that large an' enthoosiastic it plumb chokes up the hall an' overflows into the street—when all of a sudden a party comes swingin' through the open winder from the top of a scrub-oak that grows alongside the buildin', an' drops light as a cat onto the platform with Morton an' Webb. At this yere interruption, affairs comes to a halt, an' the local sports turns in to consider an' count up the invader.

This gent who swoops through the winder is dark, big, bony an' tall; his ha'r is lank an' long as the mane of a hoss; his eyes is deep an' black; his face, tanned like a Injun's, seems hard as iron. He's dressed in leather from foretop to fetlock, is shod with a pa'r of Comanche moccasins, an'

WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

besides a 'leven inch knife in his belt, packs a rifle with a 48-inch bar'l. It will weigh twenty pounds, an' yet this stranger handles it like it's a willow switch.

As this darksome gent lands in among Morton an' Webb, he stands thar without sayin' a word. Webb, on his part, is amazed, while Morton glowers.

"Whatever do you-all regyard as a market price for your skelp?" says Morton to the black interloper, at the same time loosenin' his knife.

The black stranger makes no reply; his hand flashes to his bowie, while his face still wears its iron look.

Webb, some hurried, pushes in between Morton an' the black stranger. Webb is more for peace an' don't believe in beginnin' negotiations with a knife.

Webb dictates a passel of p'lite queries to this yere black stranger. Tharupon, the black stranger bows p'lite an' formal, an' goin' over to the table writes down in good English, "I'm deaf an' dumb." Next, he searches outen his war-bags a letter. It's from Old Houston over on the Brazos. Old Houston allows that onless Austin comes trailin' in with them records within three days, he'll ride over a whole lot an' make the round-up himse'f. Old Houston declar's that Austin by virchoo' of them Comanches is as on-safe as a Christian in Mississippi, an' he don't

THE BLACK LION INN.

aim to face no sech dangers while performin' his dooties as President of the Commonwealth.

After the black stranger flings the letter on the table, he's organizin' to go out through the winder ag'in. But Morton sort o' detains him. Morton writes on the paper that now the black stranger is through his dooties as a postman, he will, if he's a dead game sport, stay over a day, an' him an' Morton will entertain themse'fs by pullin' off a war of their own. The idee strikes the black stranger as plenty good, an' while his face still wears its ca'm, hard look, he writes onder Morton's bluff:

"Rifles; no'th bank of the Colorado; sun-down, this evenin'."

The next moment he leaps from the platform to the winder an' from thar to the ground, an' is gone.

"But Colonel Morton," reemonstrates Webb, who's some scand'lized at Morton hookin' up for blood with this yere black stranger; "you-all shorely don't aim to fight this party? He's deaf an' dumb, which is next to bein' locoed outright. Moreover, a gent of your standin' can't afford to go ramblin' about, lockin' horns with every on-known miscreant who comes buttin' in with a missif from President Houston, an' then goes stampedin' through a winder by way of exit."

"Onknown!" retorts Morton. "That letter-

WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

packin' person is as well known as the Rio Grande. That's Deef Smith."

"Colonel Morton," observes Webb, some horrified when he learns the name of the black stranger, "this yere Deef Smith is a shore shot. They say he can empty a Comanche saddle four times in five at three hundred yards."

"That may be as it may," returns Morton. "If I downs him, so much the more credit; if he gets me, at the worst I dies by a famous hand."

The sun is restin' on the sky-line over to the west. Austin has done crossed the Colorado an' lined up to witness this yere dooel. Deef Smith comes ridin' in from some'ers to the no'th, slides outen the saddle, pats his hoss on the neck, an' leaves him organized an' ready fifty yards to one side. Then Deef Smith steps to the center an' touches his hat, mil'tary fashion, to Morton an' Webb.

These yere cavaliers is to shoot it out at one hundred yards. As they takes their places, Morton says:

"Jedge Webb, if this Deef Smith party gets me, as most like he will, send my watch to my mother in Looeyville."

Then they fronts each other; one in brown leather, the other in cloth as good as gold can buy. No one thinks of any difference between 'em, however, in a day when courage is the test of aristocracy.

THE BLACK LION INN.

Since one gent can't hear, Webb is to give the word with a handkerchief. At the first flourish the rifles fall to a hor'zontal as still an' steady as a rock. Thar's a brief pause; then Webb drops his handkerchief.

Thar is a crack like one gun; Deef Smith's hat half turns on his head as the bullet cuts it, while Morton stands a moment an' then, without a sound, falls dead on his face. The lead from Deef Smith's big rifle drills him through the heart. Also, since it perforates that gold repeater, an' as the blood sort o' clogs the works, the Austin folks decides it's no use to send it on to Looeyville, but retains it that a-way as a keepsake.

With the bark of the guns an' while the white smoke's still hangin' to mark the spot where he stands, Deef Smith's hoss runs to him like a dog. The next instant Deef Smith is in the saddle an' away. It's jest as well. Morton's plenty pop'lar with the Austin folks an' mebbby some sharp, in the first hysteria of a great loss, overlooks what's doo to honor an' ups an' plugs this yere Deef Smith.

The Old Cattleman made a long halt as indicative that his story was at an end. There was a moment of silence, and then the Jolly Doctor spoke up.

WHEN THE CAPITOL WAS MOVED.

“ But how about the books and papers? ” asked the Jolly Doctor.

“ Oh, nothin’ partic’lar,” said the Old Cattleman. “ It turns out like Old Houston prophecies. Three days later, vain an’ soopercilious, he rides in, corrals them archives, an’ totes ’em haughtily off to the Brazos.”

Following the Old Cattleman’s leaf from Lone Star annals, the Sour Gentleman prepared himself to give us his farewell page from the unwritten records of the Customs.

“ On this, our last evening,” observed the Sour Gentleman, “ it seems the excellent thing to tell you what was practically my final act of service or, if you will, disservice with the Customs. We may call the story ‘ How the Filibusterer Sailed.’ ”

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

It will come to you as strange, my friends, to hear objection—as though against an ill trait—to that open-handed generosity which is held by many to be among the marks of supreme virtue. Generosity, whether it be evidenced by gifts of money, of sympathy, of effort or of time, is only another word for weakness. If one were to go into careful consideration of the life-failure of any man, it would be found most often that his fortunes were slain by his generosity; and while, without consideration, he gave to others his countenance, his friendship, his money, his toil or whatever he conferred, he in truth but parted with his own future—with those raw materials wherewith he would otherwise have fashioned a victorious career. Generosity, in a commonest expression, is giving more than one receives; it is to give two hundred and get one hundred; he is blind, therefore, who does not see that any ardor of generosity would destroy a Rothschild.

From birth, and as an attribute inborn, I have

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

been ever too quick to give. For a first part of my life at least, and until I shackled my impulse of liberality, I was the constant victim of that natural readiness. And I was cheated and swindled with every rising sun. I gave friendship and took pretense; I parted with money for words; ever I rendered the real and received the false, and sold the substance for the shadow to any and all who came pleasantly to smile across my counter. I was not over-old, however, when these dour truths broke on me, and I began to teach myself the solvent beauty of saying "No."

During those months of exile—for exile it was—which I spent in Washington Square, I cultivated misanthropy—a hardness of spirit; almost, I might say, I fostered a hatred of my fellow man. And more or less I had success. I became owner of much stiffness of sentiment and a proneness to be practical; and kept ever before me like a star that, no matter how unimportant I might be to others, to myself at least I was most important of mankind. Doubtless, I lost in grace by such studies; but in its stead I succeeded to safety, and when we are at a final word, we live by what we keep and die by what we quit, and of all loyalties there's no loyalty like loyalty to one's self.

While I can record a conquest of my generosity and its subjugation to lines of careful tit-for-tat, there were other emotions against which I was unable to toughen my soul. I became never so

THE BLACK LION INN.

redoubtable that I could beat off the assaults of shame; never so puissant of sentiment but I was prey to regrets. For which weaknesses, I could not think on the affairs of The Emperor's Cigars and The German Girl's Diamonds, nor on the sordid money I pouched as their fruits, without the blush mounting; nor was I strong enough to consider the latter adventure and escape a stab of sore remorse. Later could I have found the girl I would have made her restitution. Even now I hear again that scream which reached me on the forward deck of the "Wolfgang" that September afternoon.

But concerning the Cuban filibusterer, his out-sailing against Spain; and the gold I got for his going—for these I say, I never have experienced either confusion or sorrow. My orders were to keep him in; I opened the port's gate and let him out; I pocketed my yellow profits. And under equal conditions I would do as much again. It was an act of war against Spain; yet why should one shrink from one's interest for a reason like that? Where was the moral wrong? Nations make war; and what is right for a country, is right for a man. That is rock-embedded verity, if one will but look, and that which is dishonest for an individual cannot be honest for a flag. You may—if you so choose—make war on Spain, and with as much of justice as any proudest people that ever put to sea. The question of difference

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

is but a question of strength; and so you be strong enough you'll be right enough, I warrant! For what says the poet?

“ Right follows might
Like tail follows kite.”

It is a merest truism; we hear it in the storm; the very waves are its witnesses. Everywhere and under each condition, it is true. The proof lies all about. We read it on every page of history; behold it when armies overthrow a throne or the oak falls beneath the axe of the woodman. Do I disfavor war? On the contrary, I approve it as an institution of greatest excellence. War slays; war has its blood. But has peace no victims? Peace kills thousands where war kills tens; and if one is to consider misery, why then there be more starvation, more cold, more pain, and more suffering in one year of New York City peace than pinched and gnawed throughout the whole four years of civil war. And human life is of comparative small moment. We say otherwise; we believe otherwise; but we don't act otherwise. Action is life's text. Humanity is itself the preacher; in that silent sermon of existence—an existence of world's goods and their acquirement—we forever show the thing of least consequence to be the life of man. However, I am not myself to preach, I who pushed forth to tell a story. It

THE BLACK LION INN.

is the defect of age to be garrulous, and as one's power to do departs, its place is ever taken by a weakness to talk.

This filibusterer whom I liberated to sail against Spain, I long ago told you was called Ryan. That, however, is a fictitious name; there was a Ryan, and the Spaniards took his life at Santiago. And because he with whom I dealt was also put up against a wall and riddled with Spanish lead, and further, because it is not well to give his true name, I call him Ryan now. His ship rode on her rope in New York bay; I was given the Harriet Lane to hold him from sailing away; his owners ashore—merchants these and folk on 'change—offered me ten thousand dollars; the gold was in bags, forty pounds of it; I turned my back at evening and in the morning he was gone.

You have been told how I never thought on those adventures of The Emperor's Cigars, and The German Girl's Diamonds, without sensations of shame, and pain. Indeed! they were engagements of ignobility! Following the latter affair I felt a strongest impulse to change somewhat my occupation. I longed for an employment a bit safer and less foul. I counted my fortunes; I was rich with over seventy thousand dollars; that might do, even though I gained no more. And so it fell that I was almost ready to leave the

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

Customs, and forswear and, if possible, forget, those sins I had helped commit in its name.

In the former days, my home tribe was not without consequence in Old Dominion politics. And while we could not be said to have strengthened ourselves by that part we took against the Union, still, now that peace was come, the family began little by little to regather a former weight. It had enough at this time to interfere for my advantage and rescue me from my present duty. I was detailed from Washington to go secretly to Europe, make the careless tour of her capitol, and keep an eye alive to the interests of both the Treasury and the State Department.

It was a gentleman's work; this loafing from London to Paris, and from Paris to Berlin, with an occasional glance into Holland and its diamond cutting. And aside from expenses—which were paid by the government—I drew two salaries; one from the Customs and a second from the Secret Service. My business was to detect intended smuggling and cable the story, to the end that Betelnut Jack and Lorns and Quin and the others make intelligent seizures when the smugglers came into New York. The better to gain such news, I put myself on closest terms—and still keep myself a secret—with chief folk among houses of export; I went about with them, drank with them, dined with them; and I wheedled and lay in ambush for information of big sales. I sent

THE BLACK LION INN.

in many a good story; and many a rich seizure came off through my interference. Also I lived vastly among legation underlings, and despatched what I found to the Department of State. There was no complaint that I didn't earn my money from either my customs or my secret service paymaster. In truth! I stood high in their esteem.

At times, too, I was baffled. There was a lady, the handsome wife of a diamond dealer in Maiden Lane. She came twice a year to Europe. Obviously and in plain view—like the vulgarian she was not—this beautiful woman, as she went aboard ship in New York, would wear at throat and ears and on her hands full two hundred thousand dollars' worth of stones—apparently. And there they seemed to be when she returned; and, of course, never a dime of duty. We were morally sure this beautiful woman was a beautiful smuggler; we were morally sure those stones were paste when she sailed from New York; we were morally sure they were genuine, of purest water, when she returned; we were morally sure the shift was made in Paris, and that a harvest of thousands was garnered with every trip. But what might we do? We had no proof; we could get none; we could only guess.

And there were other instances when we slipped. More than once I tracked a would-be smuggler to his ship and saw him out of port. And yet, when acting on my cables, the smuggler coming

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

down the New York gang-plank was snapped up by my old comrades and searched, nothing was found. This mystery, for mystery it was, occurred a score of times. At last we learned the trick. The particular room occupied by the smuggler was taken both ways for a round dozen trips ahead. There were seven members of the smuggling combine. When one left the room, his voyage ended, and came ashore in New York, another went duly aboard and took possession for the return trip. The diamonds had not gone ashore. They were hidden in a sure place somewhere about the room; he who took it to go to Europe knew where. And in those several times to follow when the outgoer was on and off the boat before she cleared, he found no difficulty in carrying the gems ashore. The Customs folk aren't watching departures; their vigilance is for those who arrive. However, after a full score of defeats, we solved this last riddle, and managed a seizure which lost the rogues what profits they had gathered on all the trips before.

Also, as I pried about the smuggling industry, I came across more than one interesting bit of knowledge. I found a French firm making rubies—actual rubies. It was a great secret in my time, though more is known of it now. The ruby was real; stood every test save the one test—a hard one to enforce—of specific gravity. The made ruby was a shadow lighter, bulk for bulk,

THE BLACK LION INN.

than the true ruby of the mines. This made ruby was called the "scientific ruby;" and indeed! it was scientific to such a degree of delusion that the best experts were for long deceived and rubies which cost no more than two hundred dollars to make, were sold for ten thousand dollars.

As a curious discovery of my ramblings, I stumbled on a diamond, the one only of its brood. It was small, no more than three-quarters of a carat. But of a color pure orange and—by day or by night—blazing like a spark of fire. That stone if lost could be found; it is the one lone member of its orange house. What was its fate? Set in the open mouth of a little lion's head, one may now find it on the finger of a prince of the Bourse.

It was while in Madrid, during my European hunting, that those seeds were sown which a few months later grew into a smart willingness to let down the bars for my filibusterer's escape. I was by stress of duty held a month in Madrid. And, first to last, I heard nothing from the natives when they spoke of America but malediction and vilest epithet. It kept me something warm, I promise, for all I had once ridden saber in hand to smite that same American government hip and thigh. I left Madrid when my work was done with never a moment's delay; and I carried away a profound hate for Spain and all things Spanish.

As I was brought home by commands from

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

my superiors at the end of my Madrid work, these anti-Spanish sentiments had by no means cooled when I made the New York wharf. Decidedly if I'd been searched for a sentiment, I would have been discovered hostile to Spanish interest when, within three weeks following my home-coming, I was given the Harriet Lane, shown the suspect and his ship, and told to have a sleepless eye and seize him if he moved.

It's the Norse instinct to hate Spain; and I was blood and lineage, decisively Norse. That affair of instinct is a mighty matter. It is curious to note how one's partisanship will back-track one's racial trail and pick up old race feuds and friendships; hating where one's forbears hated, loving where they loved. Even as a child, being then a devourer of history, I well recall how—while loathing England as the foe of this country—I still went with her in sympathy was she warring with France or Spain. I remember, too, that, in England's civil wars, I was ever for the Roundhead and against the King. This, you say, sounds strangely for my theory, coming as I do from Virginia, that state of the Cavalier. One should reflect that Cavalierism—to invent a word—is naught save a Southern boast. Virginia, like most seaboard Southern states, was in its time a sort of Botany Bay whereunto, with other delinquents, political prisoners were condemned; my own ancestors coming, in good truth! by edict

THE BLACK LION INN.

of the Bloody Jeffreys for the hand they took in Monmouth's rebellion. It is true as I state, even as a child, too young for emotions save emotions of instinct, I was ever the friend, as I read history, first of my own country; and next of England, Germany, Holland, Denmark and Sweden-Norway—old race-camps of my forefathers, these—and like those same forefathers the uncompromising foe of France, Spain, Italy, and the entire Latin tribe, as soon as ever my reading taught me their existence.

My filibusterer swung on his cable down the bay from Governor's Island. During daylight I held the Harriet Lane at decent distance; when night came down I lay as closely by him as I might and give the ships room as they swept bow for stern with the tide. Also, we had a small-boat patrol in the water.

It was the fourth day of my watch. I was ashore to stretch my legs, and at that particular moment, grown weary of walking, on a bench in Battery Park, from which coign I had both my filibusterer and the Harriet Lane beneath my eye, and could signal the latter whenever I would.

On the bench with me sat a well-dressed stranger; I had before observed him during my walk. With an ease that bespoke the trained gentleman, and in manner unobtrusive, my fellow bencher stole into talk with me. Sharpened of my trade, he had not discoursed a moment before

I felt and knew his purpose; he was friend to my filibusterer whose black freeboard showed broadside on as she tugged and strove with her cable not a mile away.

He carried the talk to her at last.

"I don't believe she's a filibusterer," he said. Her character was common gossip, and he had referred to that. "I don't believe she's a filibusterer. I'd be glad to see her get out if I thought she were," and he turned on me a tentative eye.

Doubtless he observed a smile, and therein read encouragement. I told him my present business; not through vain jauntiness of pride, but I was aware that he well knew my mission before ever he sat down, and I thought I'd fog him up a bit with airs of innocence, and lead him to suppose I suspected him not.

After much tacking and going about, first port and then starboard—to use the nautical phrase—he came straight at me.

"Friend," he said; "the cause of liberty—Cuban liberty, if you will—is dear to me. If that ship be a filibusterer and meant for Cuba's aid, speaking as a humanitarian, I could give you ten thousand reasons, the best in the world, why you should let her sail." This last, wistfully.

Thereupon I lighted a cigar, having trouble by reason of the breeze. Then getting up, I took my handkerchief and wig-wagged the Harriet Lane to send the gig ashore. As I prepared to

THE BLACK LION INN.

go down to the water-front, I turned to my humanitarian who so loved liberty.

“Give your reasons to Betelnut Jack,” I said; “he delights in abstract deductions touching the rights of man as against the rights of states as deeply as did that Thetford Corset maker, Thomas Paine.”

“Betelnut Jack!” said my humanitarian. “He shall have every reason within an hour.”

“Should you convince him,” I retorted, “tell him as marking a fact in which I shall take the utmost interest to come to this spot at five o’clock and show me his handkerchief.”

Then I joined the Harriet Lane.

At the hour suggested, Betelnut Jack stood on the water’s edge and flew the signal. I put the captain’s glass on him to make sure. He had been given the reasons, and was convinced. There abode no doubt of it; the humanitarian was right and Cuba should be free. Besides, I remembered Madrid and hated Spain.

“Captain,” I observed, as I handed that dignitary the glasses, “we will, if you please, lie in the Narrows to-night. If this fellow leave—which he won’t—he’ll leave that way. And we’ll pinch him.”

The Captain bowed. We dropped down to the Narrows as the night fell black as pitch. The Captain and I cracked a bottle. As we toasted each other, our suspect crept out through the

HOW THE FILIBUSTERER SAILED.

Sound, and by sunrise had long cleared Montauk and far and away was southward bound and safe on the open ocean.

“I believe,” observed the Jolly Doctor to the Sour Gentleman when the latter paused, “I believe you said that the Filibusterer was in the end taken and shot.”

“Seized when he made his landing,” returned the Sour Gentleman, “and killed against a wall in the morning.”

“It was a cheap finish for a 10,000-dollar start,” remarked the Red Nosed Gentleman, sententiously. “But why should this adventurer, Ryan, as you call him, go into the business of freeing Cuba? Where would lie his profit? I don’t suppose now it was a love of liberty which put him in motion.”

“The Cuban rebellionists,” said the Sour Gentleman, “were from first to last sustained by certain business firms in New York who had arranged to make money by their success. It is a kind of piracy quite common, this setting our Spanish-Americans to cutting throats that a profit may flow in Wall and Broad streets. Every revolution and almost every war in South and Central America have their inspirations in the counting-rooms of some great New York firm.

THE BLACK LION INN.

I've known rival houses in New York to set a pair of South American republics to battling with each other like a brace of game cocks. Thousands were slain with that war. Sure, it is the merest blackest piracy; the deeds of Kidd or Morgan were milk-white by comparison."

"It shows also," observed the Jolly Doctor, "how little the race has changed. In our hearts we are the same vikings of savage blood and pillage, and with no more of ruth, we were in the day of Harold Fairhair."

Sioux Sam, at the Old Cattleman's suggestion, came now to relate the story of "How Moh-Kwa Saved the Strike Axe."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

This shall be the story of how Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, saved Strike Axe from the medicine of Yellow Face, the bad medicine man, who would take his life an' steal the Feather, his squaw. An' it is a story good to show that you should never lose a chance to do a kind deed, since kind deeds are the steeps up which the Great Spirit makes you climb to reach the happiness at the top. When you do good, you climb up; when you do bad, you climb down; an' at the top is happiness which is white, an' at the bottom is pain which is black, an' the Great Spirit says every man shall take his choice.

Strike Axe is of the war-clan an' is young. Also he is a big fighter next to Ugly Elk who is the war chief. An' Strike Axe for all he is only a young man an' has been but four times on the war trail, has already taken five skelps—one Crow, one Blackfoot, three Pawnees. This makes big talk among all the Sioux along the Yellowstone, an' Strike Axe is proud an' gay, for he is held a

THE BLACK LION INN.

great warrior next to Ugly Elk; an' it is the Pawnees an' Crows an' Blackfeet who say this, which makes it better than if it is only the talk of the Sioux.

When Ugly Elk sets up the war-pole, an' calls to his young men to make ready to go against the Pawnees to take skelps an' steal ponies, Strike Axe is the first to beat the war-pole with his stone club, an' his war pony is the first that is saddled for the start.

Strike Axe has a squaw an' the name of the squaw is the Feather. Of the girls of the Sioux, the Feather is one of the most beautiful. Yet she is restless an' wicked, an' thinks plots an' is hungry an' thirsty to do evil. But that is not the Feather's fault.

Yellow Face, the bad medicine man, has made a spell over the Feather. Yellow Face hates Strike Axe because of so much big talk about him. Also, he loves the Feather an' would have her for his squaw. He tells her she is like the sunset, but she will not hear; then he says she is like the sunrise, but still she shakes her head, only she shakes it slow; so at last Yellow Face tells her she is like the Wild Rose, an' at that she laughs an' listens.

But the Feather will not leave Strike Axe an' go with Yellow Face, for Strike Axe is a big fighter; an' moreover, he kills many elk an' buffalo, an' his lodge is full of beef an' robes, an' the



THE STRIKE-AXE.

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

Feather is no fool. Besides, at this time her heart is not bad, but only restless.

Then Yellow Face sees he must give her a bad heart or he will never win the Feather. So Yellow Face kills the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks, who is his brother medicine, an' cooks an' feeds his heart to the Feather. Then she loves Yellow Face an' hates Strike Axe, an' would help the Yellow Face slay him. For the heart of the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks is evil, an' evil breeds evil where it touches, an' so the Feather's heart turns black like the snake's heart which she swallowed from the hand of Yellow Face.

Strike Axe does not know what the Feather an' Yellow Face say an' do, for he is busy sharpening his lance an' making arrows to shoot against the Pawnees, an' his ears an' eyes have no time to run new trails. But Strike Axe can tell that the Feather's heart is against him; an' this makes him to wonder, because he is a big fighter; an' besides he has more than any Sioux, meat an' furs an' beads an' blankets an' paint an' feathers, all of which are good to the eyes of squaws, an' the Feather is no fool. An', remembering these things, Strike Axe wonders an' wonders; but he cannot tell why the heart of the Feather is against him. An' at last Strike Axe puts away the puzzle of the Feather's heart.

"It is a trail in running water," says Strike Axe, "an' no one may follow it. The heart of a

THE BLACK LION INN.

squaw is a bird an' flies in the air an' no one may trace it." With that, Strike Axe washes his memory free of the puzzle of the Feather's heart an' goes away to the big trees by the Yellowstone to hunt.

Strike Axe tells the Feather he will be gone one moon; for now while her heart is against him his lodge is cold an' his blankets hard an' the fire no longer burns for Strike Axe, an' his own heart is tired to be alone.

It is among the big trees by the Yellowstone that Strike Axe meets Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, while Moh-Kwa is hunting for a bee tree. But he can't find one, an' he is sad an' hungry an' tells Strike Axe he fears the bees have gone far away to live with the Pawnees.

But Strike Axe says "No!" an' takes Moh-Kwa to a bee-tree he has found; an' Moh-Kwa sings in his joy, an' climbs an' eats until he is in pain; while Strike Axe stands a long way off, for the bees are angry an' their knives are out.

Moh-Kwa is grateful to Strike Axe when his pain from much honey is gone, an' says he will come each day, an' eat an' fight with the bees while there is honey left. An' Moh-Kwa asks Strike Axe to remember that he is the Great Wise Bear of the Yellowstone, an' to tell him what is evil with him so Moh-Kwa can do him good.

Strike Axe thinks very hard; then he tells Moh-Kwa how the Feather's heart is against him an'

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

has left him; he would know what the Feather will do an' where her heart has gone.

Moh-Kwa puts his paw above his eyes to keep out the sun so he can think better; an' soon Moh-Kwa remembers that the wife of the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks, when he met her hunting rats among the cliffs, told him she was now a widow, for Yellow Face had killed the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks—who was his brother medicine—an' fed his heart to the Feather.

Moh-Kwa tells Strike Axe how the Feather was bewitched by Yellow Face.

"Come now with me," said Moh-Kwa to Strike Axe, "an' I will show you what the Feather an' Yellow Face do while you are gone. You are a young buck an' a good buck, an' because of your youth an' the kind deed you did when you found for me the bees—to whom I shall go back an' fight with for more honey to-morrow and every day while it lasts—I will show you a danger like a lance, an' how to hold your shield so you may come safe from it."

Moh-Kwa took Strike Axe by the hand an' led him up a deep canyon an' into his cavern where a big fire burned in the floor's middle for light. An' bats flew about the roof of Moh-Kwa's cavern an' owls sat on points of rock high up on the sides an' made sad talks; but Strike Axe being brave an' with a good heart, was not afraid an'

THE BLACK LION INN.

went close to the fire in the floor's middle an' sat down.

Moh-Kwa got him a fish to eat; an' when it was baked on the coals an' eaten, brought him a pipe with kinnikinick to smoke. When that was done, Moh-Kwa said:

"Now that your stomach is full an' strong to stand grief, I will show you what the Feather an' Yellow Face do while you are gone; for they make medicine against you an' reach out to kill you an' take your life." Moh-Kwa then turned over a great stone with his black paws an' took out of a hole which was under the stone, a looking glass. Moh-Kwa gave Strike Axe the looking glass an' said, "Look; for there you shall see the story of what the Feather an' the wicked Yellow Face do."

Strike Axe looked, an' saw that Yellow Face was wrapping up a log in a blanket. When he had done this, he belted it with the belts of Strike Axe; an' then he put on its head the war-bonnet of Strike Axe which hung on the lodge pole. An' now that it was finished, Yellow Face said the log in the blanket an' wearing the belts an' war-bonnet was Strike Axe—as Strike Axe saw truly in the looking glass—an' Yellow Face stood up the log in its blanket an' belts an' war-bonnet, an' made his bow ready to kill it with an arrow. As Yellow Face did these things, the Feather stood watching him with a smile on her face while the

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

blood-hope shone in her eyes; for she had eaten the snake's heart an' all her spirit was black.

Strike Axe saw what went on with the Feather an' Yellow Face, an' told it as the glass told it, word for word to Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear, who sat by his side to listen.

Then Moh-Kwa, when he knew that now Yellow Face with three arrows in his left hand was stringing a bow to shoot against the log which he had dressed up an' named "Strike Axe," said there was little time to be lost; an' Moh-Kwa hurried Strike Axe to the round deep spring of clear water which was in the cavern, an' told him to stand on the edge of the spring an' look hard in the looking glass an' take sharp notice just as Yellow Face was to shoot the arrow against the log.

"An' you must dive in the spring when Yellow Face shoots," said Moh-Kwa to Strike Axe; "you must dive like the loon dives when you shoot at him on the river."

Strike Axe looked hard in the looking glass like Moh-Kwa said, an' dived in the spring when the arrow left the bow of Yellow Face.

When he came up, he looked again in the glass an' saw that Yellow Face had missed the log. Yellow Face had a half-fear because he had missed, an' Strike Axe looking in Moh-Kwa's glass could see the half-fear rising up as a mist in his eyes like a morning fog lifts up from the

THE BLACK LION INN.

Yellowstone. Also, the Feather stood watching Yellow Face, an' her eyes, which were grown hard an' little an' bright, like a snake's eyes, showed that she did not care what happened only so that it was evil.

But Moh-Kwa told Strike Axe to still watch closely, an' would not let his mind pull up its pickets an' stray; because Yellow Face would shoot twice more with the arrows which were left; an' he must be quick an' ready each time to dive like the loon dives, or he would surely die by the log's wound.

Strike Axe, because he had eaten the fish an' smoked, an' had a full stomach an' was bold an' steady with a heart made brave with much food, again looked hard in the glass; an' when the second arrow left the bow of Yellow Face he dived sharply in the spring like a loon; an' when he came up an' held the looking glass before his eyes he saw that Yellow Face had missed the log a second time.

An' now there was a whole-fear in the eyes of Yellow Face—a white fear that comes when a man sees Pau-guk, the Death, walk into the lodge; an' the hand of Yellow Face trembled as he made ready his last third arrow on the bow. But in the eyes of the Feather shone no fear; only she lapped out her tongue like the snake does, with the black pleasure of new evil at the door.

Moh-Kwa warned Strike Axe to look only at

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

Yellow Face that he might be sure an' swift as the loon to dive from the last arrow. Strike Axe did as Moh-Kwa counselled; an' when the last arrow flew from the bow, Strike Axe with a big splash was safe an' deep beneath the waters of the spring.

"An' now," said Moh-Kwa to Strike Axe, "look in the glass an' laugh, for a blessing of revenge has been bestowed on you through the Great Spirit."

Strike Axe looked an' saw that not only did Yellow Face miss the log, but the arrow flew back an' pierced the throat of Yellow Face, even up to the three eagle feathers on the arrow's shaft. As Strike Axe looked, he saw Yellow Face die; an' a feeling like the smell of new grass came about the heart of Strike Axe, for there is nothing so warm an' sweet an' quick with peace as revenge when it sees an' smells the fresh blood of its enemy.

Moh-Kwa told Strike Axe to still look in the glass; for while the danger was gone he would know what the Feather did when now that Yellow Face was killed by the turning of his own medicine.

Strike Axe looked, an' saw how the Feather dammed up the water in a little brook near the lodge; an' when the bed of the brook was free of water the Feather dug a hole in the soft ground with her hands like a wolf digs with his paws. An' the Feather made it deep an' long an' wide;

THE BLACK LION INN.

an' then she put the dead Yellow Face in this grave in the brook's bed. When she had covered him with sand an' stones, the Feather let the waters free; an' the brook went back to its old trail which it loved, an' laughed an' ran on, never caring about the dead Yellow Face who lay under its wet feet.

Then the Feather went again into the lodge an' undressed the log of its blankets, belts an' war-bonnet; an' the Feather burned the bow an' the arrows of Yellow Face, an' made everything as it was before. Only now Yellow Face lay dead under the brook; but no one knew, an' the brook itself already had forgot—for the brook's memory is slippery an' thin an' not a good memory, holding nothing beyond a moment—an' the Feather felt safe an' happy; for her heart fed on evil an' evil had been done.

Strike Axe came out from the cave with Moh-Kwa, the Wise Bear.

"You have given me life," said Strike Axe.

"You have given me honey," said Moh-Kwa.

Then Strike Axe was troubled in his mind, an' he told Moh-Kwa that he knew not what he must do with the Feather when he returned. But Moh-Kwa said that he should make his breast light, an' free his thought of the Feather as a burden, for one would be in his lodge before him with the answer to his question.

"It is the Widow," said Moh-Kwa, "who was

HOW MOH-KWA SAVED STRIKE-AXE.

the wife of the Great Rattlesnake of the Rocks; she will go to your tepee to be close to the heart of her husband. In her mouth the Widow will bring a message from Yellow Face to the Feather for whom he died an' was hid beneath the careless brook."

Thus said Moh-Kwa. An' Strike Axe found that Moh-Kwa spoke with but one tongue; for when he stood again in his lodge the Feather lay across the door, dead an' black with the message of Yellow Face which was sent to her in the mouth of the Widow. An' as Strike Axe looked on the Feather, the Widow rattled joyfully where she lay coiled on the Feather's breast; for the Widow was glad because she was near to her husband's heart.

But Moh-Kwa was not there to look; Moh-Kwa had gone early to the bee-tree, an' now with his nose in a honey comb was high an' hearty up among the angry bees.

There arose no little approbative comment on the folk-lore tales of Sioux Sam, and it was common opinion that his were by odds and away the best stories to be told among us. These hearty plaudits were not without pleasant effect on Sioux Sam, and one might see his dark cheek flush to a color darker still with the joy he felt.

THE BLACK LION INN.

And yet someone has said how the American Indian is stolid and cold.

It was the Red Nosed Gentleman, as the clock struck midnight on this our last evening and we threw our last log on the coals, who suggested that the Jolly Doctor, having told the first story, should in all propriety close in the procession by furnishing the last. There was but one voice for it, and the Jolly Doctor, who would have demurred for that it seemed to lack of modesty on his side, in the end conceded the point with grace.

“ This,” said the Jolly Doctor, composing himself to a comfortable position in his great chair, “ this, then, shall be the story of ‘ The Flim Flam Murphy.’ ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

Chicken Bill was not beautiful with his shock of coarse hair and foul pipe in mouth. Doubtless, Chicken Bill was likewise an uncompromising villain. Indeed, Pike's Peak Martin, expert both of men and mines, one evening in the Four Flush saloon, casually, but with insulting fullness, set these things forth to Chicken Bill himself; and while Pike's Peak Martin was always talking, he was not always wrong.

On this occasion of Pike's Peak Martin's frankness, Chicken Bill, albeit he carried contradiction at his belt in the shape of a six-shooter, walked away without attempting either denial or reproof. This conduct, painful to the sentiment of Timberline, had the two-fold effect of confirming Pike's Peak Martin's utterances in the minds of men, and telling against the repute of Chicken Bill for that personal courage which is the great first virtue the Southwest demands.

Old Man Granger found the earliest gold in Arizona Gulch. And hot on the news of the strike

THE BLACK LION INN.

came Chicken Bill. It was the latter's boast about the bar-rooms of Timberline that he was second to come into the canyon; and as this was the only word of truth of which Chicken Bill was guilty while he honored the camp with his presence, it deserves a record.

Following Old Man Granger's discovery of his Old Age mine, came not only Chicken Bill, but others; within a week there arose the bubbling camp of Timberline. There were saloons and hurdy-gurdies and stores and restaurants and a bank and a corral and a stage station and an express office and a post-office and an assay office and board sidewalks and red lights and many another plain evidence of civilization. Even a theatre was threatened; and, to add to the gayety as well as the wealth of the baby metropolis, those sundry cattlemen having ranges and habitats within the oak-brushed hills about, began to make Timberline their headquarters and transact their business and their debauches in its throbbing midst.

Chicken Bill was reasonably perfect in all accomplishments of the Southwest. He could work cattle; he could rope, throw, and hog-tie his steer; he could keep up his end at flanking, branding, and ear-marking in a June corral; he could saddle and ride a wild, unbroken bronco; he could make baking-powder biscuit so well flavored and light as to compel the compliments of those jealous epicures of the cow-camps who devoured them.



THE
CHICKEN BILL

CHICKEN BILL.

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

Yet Chicken Bill would not work on the ranges. There were no cards permitted in the camps, and whiskey was debarred as if each bottle held a rattlesnake. Altogether a jovial soul, and one given to revelry, would fly from them in disgust.

"It's too lonesome a play for me, this punchin' cattle," observed Chicken Bill, and so eschewed it.

While Pike's Peak Martin expounded this aversion on the part of Chicken Bill, as well as the latter's refusal to pick and dig and drill and blast in the Timberline mines, as mere laziness, public feeling, though it despised the culprit, was inclined to tolerate him in his shiftlessness. American independence in the Southwest is held to be inclusive of the personal right to refuse all forms of labor. Wherefore Chicken Bill was safe even from criticism as he hung about the saloons and faro rooms and lived his life of chosen vagabondage.

Our low-flung hero made shift in various ways. Did he find a tenderfoot whom he could cheat at cards, he borrowed a stake—sometimes, when the subject was uncommonly tender, from the victim himself—and therewith took a small sum at poker or seven-up. Another method of trivial fraud, now and then successful with Chicken Bill, was to plant a handful of brass nuggets, each of about an ounce in weight, under a little waterfall that broke into the canyon just below the windmill. There was a deal of mineral in this feeble side-stream, and the brass nuggets became coated and queer of color.

THE BLACK LION INN.

One of these Chicken Bill was able at intervals to impose at a profit upon a stranger, by swearing doughtily that it was virgin gold.

It came to pass, however, that Chicken Bill, despairing of fortune by the cheap processes of penny-ante and spurious nuggets, decided on a coup. He would stake out a claim, drift it and timber it, and then salt it to the limit of all that was possible in the science of claim-salting. Then would he sell it to the first Christian with more money than sagacity who came moved to buy a mine.

Chicken Bill was no amateur of mines. He knew the business as he knew the cow trade, and avoided it for the same reason of indolence. In his time, and after some windfall at faro-bank, Chicken Bill had grub-staked prospectors who were to "give him half" and who never came back. In his turn Chicken Bill was grub-staked by others, in which event he never came back. But it went with other experiences to teach him the trade, and on the morning when with pick and paraphernalia Chicken Bill pitched camp in Arizona Gulch a mile beyond the farthest, and where it was known to all no mineral lurked, he brought with him a knowledge of the miner's art, and began his digging with intelligent spirit. Moreover, the heart of Chicken Bill was stout for the work; for was he not planning a swindle? and did not that thought of itself swell his bosom with a mighty peace?

Once upon a time Chicken Bill had had a partner.

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

This partner was frequently on the lips of Chicken Bill, especially when our hero was in his cups. He was always mentioned with a gush of tears, this partner, and his name as furnished by Chicken Bill was Flim Flam Murphy. Flim Flam had met death somewhere in the Gunnison country while making good his name, and passed with the smoke of the Colt's-44 that dismissed him. But Chicken Bill revered the memory of this talented man and was ready to honor him, and, having staked out his claim with the fraudulent purpose aforesaid, filed on it appropriately as "The Flim Flam Murphy."

It would be unjust to the intelligence of Timberline to permit one for a moment to suppose that the dullest of her male citizenry lived unaware of the ignoble plans of Chicken Bill. That he proposed to salt a claim and therewith ensnare the stranger within the local gates were truths which all men knew. But all men cared not; and mention of the enterprise when the miracle of Chicken Bill at work found occasional comment over the bars, aroused nothing save a sluggish curiosity as to whether Chicken Bill would succeed. No thought of warning the unwary arose in the Timberline heart.

"It's the proper play," observed Pike's Peak Martin, representative of Timberline feeling, "to let every gent seelect his own licker an' hobble his own hoss. If Chicken Bill can down anybody for his bankroll without making a gun play to land the trick, thar's no call for the public to interfere."

THE BLACK LION INN.

It was about this time that Chicken Bill added to his ornate scheme of claim-salting a plain affair of the heart. The lady to thus cast her spell over Chicken Bill was known as Deadwood Maggie and flourished a popular waitress in the Belle Union Hotel. Timberline thought well of Deadwood Maggie, and her place in general favor found suggestion in a remark of Pike's Peak Martin.

"Deadwood Maggie," observed that excellent spirit, as he replaced his glass on the Four Flush bar and turned to an individual who had been guilty of words derogatory to the lady in question; "Deadwood Maggie is a virchoous young female, an' it shore frets me to hear her lightly alllooded to."

As Pike's Peak Martin's disapproval took the violent form of smiting the maligner upon the head with an 8-inch pistol, the social status of the lady was ever after regarded as fixed.

Chicken Bill was not the one to eat his heart in silence, and his passion was but one day old when he laid hand and fortune at Deadwood Maggie's feet. That maiden for her part displayed a suspicious front, born perhaps of an experience of the perfidy of man. Deadwood Maggie was inclined to a scorn of Chicken Bill and his proffer of instant wedlock.

"Not on your life!" was Deadwood Maggie's reply.

But Chicken Bill persisted; he longed more ardently because of this rebuff. To soften Deadwood

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

Maggie he threw a gallant arm about her and drew her to his bosom.

“Don’t be in sech a hurry to lose me,” said Chicken Bill on this sentimental occasion.

Deadwood Maggie was arranging tables at the time for those guests who from mine and store and bar-room would come, stamping and famishing, an hour later. Chicken Bill and she for the moment had the apartment to themselves. Goaded by her lover’s sweet persistency, and unable to phrase a retort that should do her feelings justice, Deadwood Maggie fell to the trite expedient of breaking a butter-dish on the head of Chicken Bill.

“Now pull your freight,” said she, “or I’ll chunk you up with all the crockery in the camp.”

Finding Deadwood Maggie obdurate, Chicken Bill for the nonce withdrew to consider the situation. He was in no sort dispirited; he regarded the butter-dish and those threats which came after it as marks of maiden coyness; they were decisive of nothing.

“She wasn’t in the mood,” said Chicken Bill, as he explained his repulse to the bar-keeper of the Four Flush Saloon; “but I’ll get my lariat on her yet. Next time I’ll rope with a larger loop.”

“That’s the racket!” said the bar-keeper.

Chicken Bill in a small way was a gifted rascal. After profound contemplation of Deadwood Maggie in her obstinacy, he determined to win her with the conveyance of a one-quarter interest in The

THE BLACK LION INN.

Flim Flam Murphy. Deadwood Maggie knew nothing of the worthlessness of The Flim Flam Murphy. Chicken Bill would represent it to her as a richer strike than Old Man Granger's Old Age Mine. He would give her one-quarter. There would be no risk; Deadwood Maggie, when once his wife and getting a good figure for the mine, would make no demur to selling to whatever tender-foot he might dupe. This plan had merit; at least one must suppose so, for the soul of Deadwood Maggie was visibly softened thereby.

"I must have you, Maggie," wooed Chicken Bill, when he had put forth the sterling character of The Flim Flam Murphy and expressed himself as determined to bestow on her the one-fourth interest, a conveyance whereof in writing he held then in his hand; "I can't live without you. When you busted me with that yootensil you made me yours forever. I swear by this gun I pack, I'll not outlive your refusal to wed me longer than to jest get good an' drunk an' put a bullet through my head."

Who could resist such love and such hyperbole? Deadwood Maggie wept; then she took the deed to the one-fourth interest in The Flim Flam Murphy, kissed Chicken Bill, and said she would drift into his arms as his wife at the end of two months. Chicken Bill objected strenuously to such a recess for his affections, but with the last of it was driven to yield.

There came a time when The Flim Flam Mur-

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

phy salted to the last degree of salt was as perfect a trap for a tenderfoot as any ever set. And as though luck were seeking Chicken Bill, a probable prey stepped from the stage next day.

Chicken Bill and the stranger were seen in prompt and lengthy conference. Timberline, looking on, grinned in a tolerant way. For two days Chicken Bill and the stranger did nothing but explore the drift, inspect the timbering, and consider specimens taken from The Flim Flam Murphy.

At last the stranger filled ten small canvas sacks with specimens of ore and brought them into camp on a buckboard to be assayed. Chicken Bill was with him; and pleading internal pains that made it impossible to ride upright, our wily one lay back with the bags of specimens while the stranger drove. From time to time the astute Chicken Bill, having advantage of rough places in the canyon's bed which engaged the faculties of the stranger, emptied some two or three quills of powdered gold into each specimen sack by the ingenious process of forcing the sharpened point of the quill through the web of the canvas, and blowing the treasure in among the ore.

"It's a cinch!" ruminated Chicken Bill, when he had completed these improvements. Then he refreshed himself from a whiskey flask, said that he felt better, and climbed back beside the stranger on the buckboard's seat.

There came the assay next day. With that ceremony Chicken Bill had nothing to do, and could only

THE BLACK LION INN.

wait. But he owned no misgivings; there would come but one result; the ore would show a richness not to be resisted.

Chicken Bill put in his time preparing Deadwood Maggie for the sale. He told her that not a cent less than sixty thousand dollars would be accepted.

"It's worth more," declared Chicken Bill, "but me an' you, Maggie, ain't got the long green to develop it. Our best play is to cash in if we can get the figure."

But disaster was striding on the trail of Chicken Bill. That evening, as Deadwood Maggie was returning to the Belle Union from the Dutch Woman's Store, to which mart she had been driven for a tooth-brush, she was blasted with the spectacle of Chicken Bill and a Mexican girl in confidential converse just ahead. Deadwood Maggie, a bit violent of nature, had been in no wise calmed by her several years on the border. While not wildly in love, still her impulse was to dismantle, if not dismember, the senorita thus softly whispering and being whispered to by the recreant Chicken Bill. But on second thought Deadwood Maggie restrained herself. She would observe the full untruth of Chicken Bill.

The next day, when Chicken Bill called on Deadwood Maggie, he was met with a smothering flight of table furniture and told never to come back.

It was a crisis with Chicken Bill. The assay had been a victory and the stranger stood ready,



THE
PIKE'S PEAK
MARTIN.

PIKE'S PEAK MARTIN.

Journal of Management Studies, 19(1), 67-80.

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

cash in hand, to pay the sixty thousand dollars demanded for The Flim Flam Murphy. Chicken Bill felt the necessity of getting the money without delay. Any marplot, whether from drink or that mean officiousness which hypocrites call "conscience," might say the word that would arm the tenderfoot with a knowledge of his peril. But Chicken Bill could not come to speech with Deadwood Maggie. In a blaze of jealousy, that wronged woman would begin throwing things the moment he appeared. As a last resort, Chicken Bill dispatched the bar-keeper of the Four Flush to Deadwood Maggie. This diplomat was told to set forth the crying needs of the hour, Chicken Bill promising friendship for life and five hundred dollars if he made Deadwood Maggie see reason.

Ten minutes later the bar-keeper returned, bleeding from a cut over his eye.

"Did it with a stove-lifter," he explained, as he laved the wound in a basin at the corner of the bar. "Say! you can't get near enough to that lady to give her a diamond ring."

Chicken Bill made a gesture of despair; he saw that Deadwood Maggie was lost to him forever.

But the sale of The Flim Flam Murphy must go on. Chicken Bill sought the tenderfoot. He found him with a smile on his face reading the report of The Flim Flam Murphy assay. Chicken Bill guardedly explained that he had a partner, name not given, who objected to the sale. The partner held

THE BLACK LION INN.

a one-quarter share in The Flim Flam Murphy. The stranger, who knew it all along from the records, pondered briefly. Finally he broke the silence:

“Would Chicken Bill sell his three-quarters?”

Chicken Bill composed his face. Chicken Bill would sell.

Nothing is big in the Southwest; transactions of millions are disposed of while one eats a flap-jack. In an hour the stranger had acquired The Flim Flam Murphy interest which was vested in Chicken Bill; in two hours that immoralist was speeding by vague trails to regions new, forty-five thousand dollars in his belt and a soreness in his heart.

Timberline felt a quiet amusement in the situation. It leaned back and waited in a superior way for the stranger to set up the low wail of the robbed. The outcry couldn't be long deferred; the fraud must be soon unmasked since the development of The Flim Flam Murphy was gone about with diligence and on a dazzling scale.

But the stranger did not complain.

Two weeks were added to that vast eternity which had preceded them and the sobered sentiment of Timberline began to think it might better investigate. Timberline, however, would proceed with caution; missing its laugh, it must now guard itself against being laughed at.

It turned as the wise ones had begun to apprehend. The Flim Flam Murphy was a two-million-

THE FLIM FLAM MURPHY.

dollar wonder. The talented Chicken Bill had overreached himself. With no hope beyond a plan to salt a claim, he had not thought to secure an assay for himself. The Flim Flam Murphy loomed upon mankind as Timberline's richest strike.

Pike's Peak Martin was the first to collect himself. Crawling from beneath that landslide of amazement which had caught and covered Timberline, he visited the Belle Union with a resolved air. Pointedly but fully Pike's Peak Martin tendered himself in marriage to Deadwood Maggie. That lady did not hurl a butter-dish; such feats would seem too effervescent on the part of a gentlewoman worth five hundred thousand dollars.

Deadwood Maggie blushed with drooping lids as she heard the words of Pike's Peak Martin.

"Which your offer shore makes a hit with me," murmured Deadwood Maggie. Then, when a moment later, her head lay on Pike's Peak Martin's shoulder like some tired flower at rest, Deadwood Maggie gave a sigh, and lifting her eyes to the deep inquiring gaze of Pike's Peak Martin, she whispered: "You're the only gent I ever loved."

THE END.

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